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ON THE COVER

It's Ouie Pierre on this season's Pet Issue! (We love those ears.)

About the photographer: Brent Dundore of BD Portraits Photography Studio is a new Minneapolis photographer who specializes in pet and people portraits. Former Los Angeles celebrity and fashion photographer, BD is also the photographer and image developer of the well received MARRY US Campaign. See more at www.BDportraits.com.

Photo by Andy Lien



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Photo by BD Portraits Photography Studio



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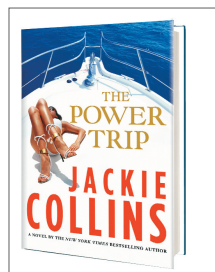
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FROM THE EDITOR | Andy Lien

I TOOK my own advice and talked to some people about the freedom to marry. Let me qualify that statement: I'm always talking about it, but I *really* talked...you know what I mean. As much as I dislike the phrase "continue the conversation," that's what I did. I continued the damn conversation to move from voting against that amendment to extending the freedom to marry to same-sex couples. You know what?

It was really hard.

I spoke with multiple people so that nobody is singled out in this piece. What I noticed in having the conversations is that there is a disconnect with people. A disconnect that I didn't expect. It has to do with the gravity of the situation. This is pure speculation, but I have two theories about this disconnect.

First, for the Democrats, it's difficult to articulate that our chosen political party, particularly for the social liberals of the DFL, could prioritize civil rights to be addressed at an unknown date in the future. That shows a lack of priority. Talking to people, it's too soon to do it this session, next session would be during an election year...and then the same two-year cycle starts again. There would be no convenient time, according to those parameters. Perfectly reasonable people (from legislators to laypeople) who believe in equal rights don't see the immediacy and priority that should be given this situation—a group of people are being denied civil rights. Yes, there are other important issues to address in the state, but how much *more important* are they than civil rights? The budget? Jobs? Those are perpetual problems. Is asking legislators to multi-task too much of an overreach? Stop making excuses for the legislators. It doesn't do anyone any favors. They're big boys and girls and are paid to have the difficult job of representing their *entire* state of tax-paying citizens. Expect it of them, don't ask it of them.

Second, I speculate that the Allies need a little nudge. I could get a fair bit of flak for this, but it's critical to reiterate that civil rights affect this community every day. Allies were crucial to the VOTE NO campaign. Where we need to focus is moving Allies from voting no to supporting the freedom to marry...to supporting the freedom to marry *now*. Those who identify as Ally have all the best intentions for this community, but don't walk in the shoes of this community.

I had a voicemail message that reduced me to tears a few weeks ago. A gentleman was expressing his frustration after contacting politicians about this issue and was met with some ambivalence, some resistance. Per Michael's voicemail message (pg. 50) and our follow-up phone conversation, I heard and felt his frustration and fear. Recently, he and his partner had experienced a health-related issue for one of them that brought up medical issues and all sorts of "what ifs" in terms of what could happen to them today, now, next month. Because rights are tied up with marriage, this community is affected every day. It's not necessarily only about having the right to get married as it is the right to be married and die married. People who aren't living it can look in on it and feel empathy, but don't really know what it's like to feel helpless in doing something so basic as being allowed access to one's beloved. Next year is not as crucial as this year, though both are necessary. And, I think that it's something to gently mention to the Allies. Everyone could use the reminder, really.

Apparently, the legislation is going to be introduced this session to push for the freedom to marry for same-sex couples. In a two-

prong approach to this issue, the legislators need to do their jobs and keep it on the table; but the public also needs to step up and show obvious and unquestionable support for legislation to allow same-sex couples to join marriage.

This brings me to a question: Where'd everybody go?

Remember when we could see a sea of orange and blue? I still see the bumper stickers as I'm driving around both here in the Twin Cities as well as in Duluth and up the North Shore. I'm sure they're still in St. Cloud and Rochester and all sorts of cities and towns. Heck, when I'm visiting my parents, there's at least one VOTE NO bumper sticker in Co-kato. People still wear their t-shirts. Lawn signs are still up (even though it's against the rules to have them up this long after an election...just so you know). We are still showing our disdain for that damned amendment, but where's our support of the freedom to marry?

Maybe the Freedom to Marry Day at the Capitol on Valentine's Day will bring with it some demonstrative swag. I'd like some bumper stickers that look like the "VOTE NO" on top of "DON'T LIMIT THE FREEDOM TO MARRY" ones, but say "I DO" on top of "SUPPORT THE FREEDOM TO MARRY." I'd slap one of those on my Jeep faster than you can take the money that I'd pay for it. The same goes for t-shirts, as long as you make my size. Give me a Twibbon for Twitter and Facebook that says "I DO" right beneath my smiling face. By claiming "I DO" as a slogan, it'd subvert the traditional notion of marriage, but in a gentle and innocuous way—a way that'll make sense to the future generations. Need help designing the swag? Let me know; one of my previous lifetimes was that of a graphic designer. I could design and get those press in an afternoon. Well, almost any professional could. All you need to do is say, "Go."

Why am I stuck on swag and promotional items? For one thing, they're obvious signs of support for the legislators. But, perhaps more importantly, I'm stuck on swag because people need something to speak for them. And I don't blame them. The signs and t-shirts and politicized profile pictures do a lot of our heavy lifting for us. They're like amulets. They give us strength. Message-wise, a change in logo also helps to fortify a change in mission: It's no longer VOTE NO, it's now all about supporting the freedom to marry. Become a card-carrying member of the movement. Wear your heart on your sleeve. Be a safe zone for those looking for strength in numbers. As voraciously as we bought up and gave out the VOTE NO items, the freedom to marry pieces could go just as quickly. And, with them, we can have more of those conversations.

I'm not going to tell you that these conversations are easy (not that the VOTE NO ones were). We still need to talk to people who don't believe same-sex couples should join marriage. What's different, though, is that the talks have to also happen with people we see as friendly, our allies in either political affiliation or Allies in self-identification. Talking to people about the importance of the freedom to marry and the priority of civil rights usually involves telling people they're wrong. If it's not explicitly said, it's implied. It's saying that by thinking the freedom to marry should be put off until after the important stuff is handled, you are incorrect in not seeing civil rights for what they are: priorities.

With you and with thanks,

Andy 

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Barack Obama – Present

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“It is now our generation’s task to carry on what those pioneers began. For our journey is not complete until our wives, our mothers, and daughters can earn a living equal to their efforts. Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law—for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well.”

American Family Association’s Bryan Fischer – Past Imperfect

“Homosexuals do not have a constitutional right to engage in sodomy... It’s absurd in the extreme, it’s ridiculous, it’s ludicrous for homosexuals to claim that they have some kind of constitutional right to engage in sexually deviant behavior.”

“All men are created equal, but nobody, nobody, nobody is born

gay. Nobody’s born that way!”

Jacob Rudolph, New Jersey high school senior receiving Class Actor award – Future

“Sure I’ve been in a few plays and musicals, but more importantly, I’ve been acting every single day of my life. You see, I’ve been acting as someone I’m not. Most of you see me every day. You see me acting the part of ‘straight’ Jacob, when I am in fact GLBT... I’m not going to do it anymore. It’s time to end the hate in our society and accept the people for who they are regardless of their sex, race, orientation, or whatever else may be holding back love and friendship. So take me, leave me, or move me out of the way. Because I am what I am, and that’s how I’m going to act from now on.”

The Bryan Fischers, their muddled science, irrational thinking, and chauvinism (what about lesbians?) won’t vanish overnight. Hope lies in the young who stand up, speak out, and in the coming generations, that like classmates who gave Rudolph a standing ovation, insist that all of America’s citizens enjoy truly equal rights under the law. □

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René Jesus Valdes May 27, 1948-February 2, 2012

ONE YEAR ago, René, linguist, Gay Games Medalist, and 30 year HIV survivor, died after increasingly difficult bouts of mental anguish. Born in Havana, Cuba, he battled discrimination after being expelled from the University and employment for being gay. He came to the US in 1980 in the Mariel boatlift and arrived in Camp McCoy, Wisconsin where the US government sought to deny him citizenship when he admitted he was gay. He met gay activist Bruce Brockway who helped him get out of the camp and they became lovers. They lived together until Bruce's death in 1984.

He began work at Control Data working on PLATO, one of the first computer-based educational programs. Diagnosed with AIDS in 1984, he was part of the generation that encouraged the FDA to open clinical trials to those that were dying. One such trial in 1986 for a protease inhibitor gave him his life back. Despite the illness, he earned his Master's Degree in Hispanic Linguistics at the University of Minnesota. After a lengthy court fight, René won his citizenship in 1989.

René was a handsome and sexy man who spoke seven languages including Esperanto and could get along in at least six others. A tenor in the Twin Cities Gay Chorus, he also did a one-man show in Patrick's Cabaret, singing, telling his life stories and playing guitar. Active in DFL politics, René always participated in the AIDS Walk and Pride.

In 2000, he moved to the West Coast for work where he won several awards from Microsoft for specialized applications of linguistics. He won gold, silver and bronze medals for track and field in the Cologne Gay Games in 2010.

René met his final partner Alan Lessik in 2000 and moved to San Francisco in 2011. They traveled around the world together and frequently returned to Minnesota. He is survived by his sons, Sandor and Franco Valdes, his aunt Helga Engelhardt, former partners, relatives and friends around the world. □

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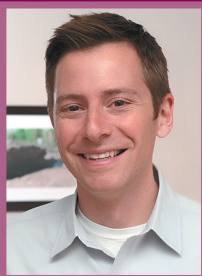
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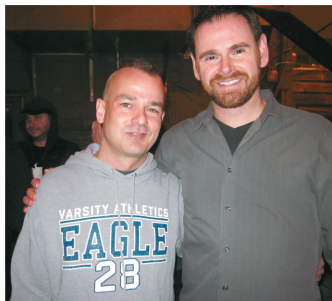
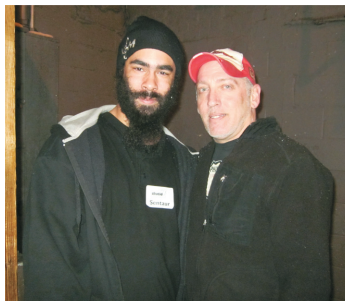
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Long Day's Journey Into Night. Photo by Michael Brosilow

CINDY SHERMAN

Through Feb. 17

Walker Art Center, 1750 Hennepin Av., Mpls
(612) 375-6000

www.walkerart.org

Scoot over Meryl and Daniel Day because Cindy Sherman gives you a run for your money in the transformation department. The solo visual artist who is the subject of her photographs has been expanding her vision since the '80s and the Walker's retrospective is—and I know the term is overused but it's accurate—amazing.

Practically all the photos have 'Untitled' and then a number in the title, so they are sectioned off into themes such as fashion and history. Her History Portraits (1988-90) are inspired by Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, and Neo-Classical paintings. Sherman crosses gender lines and convincingly poses as clerical and aristocratic men. She expresses class differences as an aging scullery maid and a queen with an emphasis on bare breasts that are the only thing that gives away their contemporary sensibility. These portraits are supremely witty and uncanny re-imaginings of a genre.

Sherman's transformations are often aided by prosthetic pieces, sometimes taken to extremes with a pig snout or a centerfold spoof in which she wears a mask and every other naked part of her body appears to be fake. In sum, Sherman is a master of disguise who shows us the outer limits of how we can construct identity through appearance.

LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT

Through Feb. 23

Guthrie Theater, 818 So. 2nd St., Mpls.
(612) 377-2224

www.guthrietheater.org

Eugene O'Neill's intense mirror of his family issues tends to be automatically regarded by scholars and critics everywhere as one of—if not the—greatest play by the man generally thought of as America's all-time greatest playwright. Indeed, it's almost a rote reaction. But there's nothing rote about the Guthrie's illuminating revival of the masterpiece, which, believe it or not, has never been produced during the Big G's 50 years of operations until now. *Long Day's Journey Into Night's* themes of alcoholism, prescription drug abuse, strangulating religious conservatism, chronic fear of poverty that drives people to outlandish economic theories, and conflict between traditional literature (ie. Shakespeare) and progressive (read: gay) literature (ie. Oscar Wilde), are woven into the tortured speech and behavior patterns of a family headed by a commercial stage actor patriarch and cheapskate a century ago.

Joe Dowling has directed the drama with a vivid apprehen-

sion of its lyrical shape. No. It's not a musical but the four tormented main characters' spoken voices in the first half are like a manic symphony of verbal jackhammers, which is what O'Neill (1888-1953) essentially demands in the script. It demands a lot of the audience, but if you actively watch and listen you are in for numerous marvelous line deliveries that may well stay with you for days. You will understand from this production why it's said that O'Neill brought American drama kicking and screaming into the 20th century.

Then, in Act II the characters each have their own sections where-in they speak their personal truths. It's almost like a series of nonmusical arias with bits of dialogue by other characters splicing in every now and then. But unlike an opera, there's nothing obviously stylized by this brilliant cast's bewitching interpretation. It's all grit and rawness of souls laid bared...not to mention a continual undercurrent of searing sardonic wit that sneaks up on you when you may least expect it.

Peter Michael Goetz and Helen Carey astound as the aging married couple, James and Mary Tyrone. John Catron and John Skelley are both endearing and maddening as their sons, Jamie and Edmund. This is perhaps the best Guthrie show in a few years and, frankly, it ought to be considered for a transfer to Broadway and London. A sterling example of classic American drama viscerally fully realized.



Pinocchio. Photo by Dan Norman

PINOCCHIO

Through Feb. 24

Children's Theatre, 2400 Third Av. S., Mpls.
(612) 874-0400

www.childrenstheatre.org

Continued on page 18 ➔



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Reefer Madness. Photo by Laurie Etchen

At the matinee I caught of CTC's *Pinocchio* there were a few times when I thought the kids in the audience were going to riot. When *Pinocchio*, played in a spiffy crossgender turn by Elise Langer, asks the crowd to choose between school or music, it was like a Vikings game! Greg Banks's inspired stage adaptation of Carlo Collodi's book begins with a group of painters who enter the stage area which has scaffolding, ladders, and other work site set pieces (Joseph Stanley, scenic designer). They ask the audience to leave because they have to paint. Of course, the kids demand they perform the show, so the painters quickly become an electrical ensemble of actors who play multiple roles with inventive use of props. Paintbrushes become donkey ears. A long red wig becomes a fox tail. Bradley Greenwald, Maggie Chestovich, Dean Holt, and onstage musician-painter Victor Zupanc are delightfully compelling.

Banks, who also directs the show, is subversive in that it's very low-tech and yet has an epic sweep. No need for special technical gimmicks and Mary Anna Culligan's worker costumes are appropriately plain. Yet you feel as if you've witnessed a real odyssey as

Pinocchio joins a puppet show, falls prey to slavery, and is swallowed by a whale. Indeed, the simple silhouette against a tarp that portrays the whale chase made the kids ecstatic. Just goes to show, storytelling—simple, true, and authentic—will always trump fancy effects.

REEFER MADNESS

Through Feb. 24
New Century Theatre, City Center, 615 Hennepin Av., Mpls.
(800) 922-2787
www.hennepintheatretrust.org

Minneapolis Musical Theatre and the Hennepin Theatre Trust offer a timely spoof on the 'evils'

of weed. Recent liberalization of marijuana policy at the ballot box and the Justice Department have been reconfiguring how we as a society approach the subject. Director Steven Meerdink notes "the original 1936 movie was financed by a church group under the title *Tell Your Children*. It was intended to be shown to parents as a morality tale attempting to tell them about the dangers of cannabis use. However, soon after the film was shot, it was purchased by producer Dwain Esper, who re-cut the film for distribution and the exploitation film circuit. The film did not gain an audience until it was rediscovered in the the 1970s and gained new life as a piece of unintentional comedy among advocates of cannabis policy reform. Today, it is in the public domain in the US and is considered a cult film. It inspired the musical satire, which premiered Off-Broadway in 2001 and the film based on the musical in 2005."

SPEED-THE-PLOW

Feb. 15 – Mar. 9
The Miller Bag Building, 861 E. Hennepin Av., Mpls.
www.darkstormy.org

A perfect dark stage comedy for Oscar season. Director Ben McGovern describes "two men form a rickety bond based on a mutual urge for protection and self-advancement. When that bond is tested by a woman who offers them a glimpse into a world free of the need for this tribal mentality, playwright David Mamet exposes "the inherent fear and misogyny that helps drive Hollywood's media moguls." Actors Sarah Marsh, Kris L. Nelson, and Bill McCallum are known for their strong work at Park Square and the Guthrie. This is a chance to see them up close in an intimate performance space. Mamet is known for his spare dialogue and scathing insights into corruption among those out to make as easy (and sleazy) and as big a buck as possible. □



Speed-The-Plow. Photo by John Eastman

Temero

By Molly Smith Metzler

Directed by Mark Valdez



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KE\$HA *Warrior*

The Dollar Sign's latest didn't cross my desk until after I finished my 2012 year-in-review. A shame, as the collaboration here with Iggy Pop, "Dirty Love," was easily one of the year's worst moments. Iggy sounds completely lost amid the crushing techno beat and the pair show zero chemistry. The bulk of the album is better, but Ke\$ha's sub-Lady-Gaga persona wears thin quickly. While early tracks like "Die Young" (alas, not a Black Sabbath cover) show the pop smarts that have brought the singer legions of fans, the back half of the album—from about the duet with Iggy, actually—wears the listener down until the thought of spending another second with the singer is just a horror.



BIG BOI *Vicious Lies and Dangerous Rumors*

The other guy in Outkast may seem to live in Andre 3000's shadow, but Big Boi was (maybe is, the duo is on hiatus) a vital component of their sound. That's has been showcased on his two solo ventures, which are loaded with the sinewy, hip-moving funk of the band. Working with a bevy of collaborators on nearly every song, Big Boi showcases a continued willingness to explore fresh sounds. Sure, the likes of Big K.R.I.T. and ASAP Rocky are here, but he also teams up with moody synth rockers Phantogram on a pair of tracks that deftly merge their distinct musical directions. Even the stabs at dumb pop music (like "Mama Told Me," with Kelly Rowland) show more smarts than necessary for the charts.



TAME IMPALA *Lonerism*

There's nothing like a late-year musical surprise to renew your enthusiasm for music. Australia has long been a fertile breeding ground, and there have been a number of strong exports in the last couple of years (or we just started paying attention again). Hailing from Perth, Tame Impala play a style of neo psychedelia that should warm the hearts of many musical explorers, from fans of locals Vampire Hands or fellow travelers The Flaming Lips. Their sophomore release trundles along with a relentless backbeat and a pulsating rhythm section. Singer and guitarist Kevin Parker leads it all with heavily distorted vocals that are as much about setting the mood as telling any clear stories. It's like a burst of bright, warm Australian summer — perfect for our winter months.



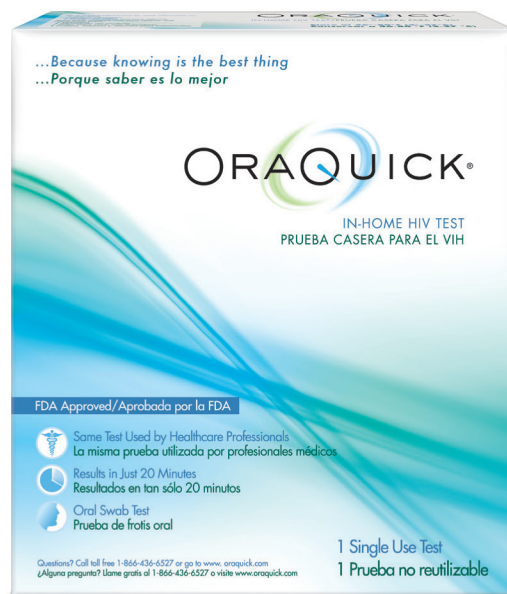
THE AMAZING *Gentle Stream*

Trying to bring back a past era is always fraught with danger, especially in music. Ape it too closely, and the listeners will just go back to the originals. The Amazing do nostalgia right, evoking the vibe of late 1960s/early 1970s psychedelic and progressive rock without sounding too familiar. The band's latest album, at its best, sounds like some musical relic lost for 40 years and just recently unearthed. The band isn't just about mood, however. The Swedish combo has the songs to back up the vibe. Moody explorations like "The Fog" sit side-by-side with "Gone," a heavier, rocking track that twists and turns for six minutes, building up to a beautiful, stunning end. It's just a brilliant record from a strong up-and-coming act.



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NEW SCENIC CAFÉ

There is a specific shade of slate blue-gray that Lake Superior turns just before the sky opens up and unleashes its unpredictable torrents. The waves crash against rocks turning them a slick



onyx. When the sun comes out, the water brightens and dances a scintillating azure color. The sky is dotted with white gulls while speckled loons dive into the arctic depths in search of a little lunch. No matter the season, the lake seems to live and breathe; it's mesmerizing. Driving along the edge of the lake from Duluth



Clockwise from below: Artwork adorns the clean North Shore design; Seasonal watercolor of birch trees by a local 9-year-old artist named Ruby; Gnocchi with artichoke, tomatoes, olives, and crisped capers; Chef and Owner, Scott Graden, who is celebrating 15 years of New Scenic Café. Photos by Andy Lien





toward Two Harbors, it's easy to get a neck cramp, craning to see all the natural beauty this part of the state.

The place to stop to find the food whose beauty matches that of the surrounding is always the New Scenic Café. Although it isn't entirely new anymore, fast approaching their fifteenth year in business, they have been changing diners' expectations of what a northern café dining experience can be.

On an icy day in January, I sat down to chat with the owner and visionary, Scott Graden. What I first noticed were his hands, calloused and strong, delivering a warm, firm handshake. In addition to building the ever-changing, seasonal menu, Scott built much of the building himself. He had also more recently built a yurt sitting outside. A round, domed structure, he and a friend had put it together hoping that, in the warmer months, it will act as an extension of their outdoor space. More metaphorically, Graden has also built a collective of local sources for food, not something that anyone was doing back when he first opened the doors at the New Scenic. When possible, they buy from local producers, but the menu isn't strictly local.

The design of the restaurant is full of clean Scandinavian-style lines with warm, wood-paneled walls. The food is also simple, clean, and extraordinary.

A rotating appetizer special of tuna sashimi taco, tucked into a crispy shell, topped with creamy avocado, and doused with a little soy sauce is unearthly; so heavenly light and loaded with flavor.

Continued on page 24 ➔

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(From left) Variety of crusty breads to dip into a pungent Taleggio fondue; Tuna Tacos feature thick slabs of tuna with avocado and salty sauce in crispy casing. Photos by Andy Lien

Followed by a bite of their house-made pickled ginger, it's delightful.

A taleggio cheese fondue arrived full of molten goodness with a tell-tale whiff of serious cheese. Served with cubes of crusty bread, atop a little lit candle, the cheese stretched and bubbled in the most satisfying manner. Especially wonderful was a cranberry-nut whole wheat bread, dragged through the pungent cauldron.

Our entrée was a dish of gnocchi, tossed in a light cream sauce with barely blistered cherry tomatoes that popped in the mouth, Kalamata olives, and an artichoke heart

placed at the center of the dish like a floral bouquet.

I was sent with strict instructions from a friend that I must absolutely be certain to experience the pie. The crust shattered at first forkful. The berry stuffing was so perfectly composed that the natural sweetness came through. There was none of that empty pocket that can come with a berry pie—the land of forgotten sweetness between the top layer of crust and where the berries collapse below. It was so perfectly composed, with a dollop of freshly whipped cream on top that I'm considering commissioning a painter to forever

commemorate this singular pie experience. Even the whipped cream was extraordinarily beautiful, a lovely golden hue, clearly coming from cows who have been allowed to graze. It was a stunner for sure.

In addition to the delightful dishes that the kitchen churns out, Graden also spends time teaching at a nearby college. New Scenic also offers catering, which would absolutely make a summer destination wedding. He's clearly passionate about everything he does, from cultivating his restaurant, carpentry, teaching, to spreading the word about eating locally (even if we couldn't possibly harvest

Continued on page 26 ➔

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Slice



Berry Pie. You must get the pie.
 Photo by Andy Lien

artichokes on the tundra and that tuna didn't come from across the street).

Also, after years of requests, Graden is putting together a cookbook from the New Scenic Café; expect to hear more about it this year.

There is a place in the front where they sell maple syrup—made from trees tapped nearby—and other artisan wares. The ties to the community are evident in the artwork displayed on the walls as well. A friend's young daughter even created the beautiful watercolor painting that appears on the back of the menu.


No matter the season, a trip up the North Shore will always include stunning vistas...and those should always include the view looking out from inside the New Scenic Café over a slice of perfect berry pie. □



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**NEWSY
BITS**

The Longfellow neighborhood is hopping. As press loomed, I was still waiting for the new **Blue Door Pub** to open, which it should be by the time this lands in your hands. I'm anxious to see what they do with a larger space, but already know that my love for that Jiffy Burger will always remain true.

There is also movement in the former East Lake Street Garage space. **Zeke's Unchained Animal** is coming and promises gourmet pizzas, burgers, and brews.

Just a hop, skip, and a jump down East Lake Street from there, the newly opened **Parka** has already gotten some fawning reviews. My first few tastes were stunners. It's a collaborative effort from **Erick Harcey** (of **Victory 44**), **Dogwood Coffee**, and **Rustica Bakery**. Pick up packs of those insanely good bittersweet chocolate cookies, a pound of beans, or grab a lunch or dinner full of innovative comfort foods.

There was a while where everyone was griping about the trend of foams—I say, some are here to stay. The cream cheese “whiz” served with the ham-and-pickle-packed tots was certainly a treat.

Speaking of culinary masterminds, **Doug Flicker**, owner of **Piccolo** and purveyor of astounding food treats, is taking over **Sandcastle**. The concession stand at Nokomis will follow the new tradition of **Bread & Pickle** at Lake Harriet and **Sea Salt** at Minnehaha Falls. Expectations are high and Flicker often exceeds. Bring on the warm weather!



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Havana, Cuba. Photo courtesy of Stock.xchng

VIVA CUBA

I'm riding shotgun along the city's main avenue at 50 mph in a 1959 Dodge, inhaling the sultry sea breeze that fans the Old City's contagious energy. This is Havana, where time is frozen. "Muy bonito!" sings out Rafael, owner of this gypsy taxi, as we sail past once-glamorous facades of crumbling stucco and rusting balconies.

The next night, my ride is a vrooming '55 Chevy, pridefully shined and polished—another cog in the city's rolling museum of '50s autos, which their owners cherish more than their girlfriends. (A third drive in a tinny '83 Russian Lada offered a rattling reminder of the U.S. embargo during the Cold War.)

When the Russians ended their aid, times turned tough. But nowadays, Cuba is climbing out of the austerity of that "special period." Yet there are still few pesos to spare. Cubans stand in line with their ration books to pick up food, and their seriously gorgeous, scrolled and columned mansions, now sub-sub-divided for multiple families, are leaning into the cobblestones.

Canadian and Russian tourists flock here, mostly for Cuba's beach resorts, but Americans cannot just hop a plane. I'm here the only legal way, as part of a government-sanctioned people-to-people program offered by several tour companies that focus on interacting with locals rather than simply drinking rum and shopping (though we managed plenty of both).

First stop, right off the plane from Miami, was Revolutionary Plaza with its larger-than-life portraits of Che and other heroes. This is where Fidel Castro delivers those six-hour speeches. Soon we're wandering into Romeo y Julieta, a time-warp shop where the primo cigars bearing that name are sold. It's now government-owned, as are many shops, restaurants and hotels. Next, we gawk at the Capitolio, which looks (ahem) exactly like its counterpart in Washington, D.C., except for the fleet of '50s autos parked in front.

Daniel, an architect involved in renovating Old Havana's 3,400 historic buildings, leads us on a walking tour, starting in the

Plaza des Armas, lined with open-air bookstalls under rows of Royal palms, aside the fort of 1577 erected by Spain after the first tourist, Christopher Columbus, landed here. The ornate Governor's Palace of 1774 is now a history museum.

Cathedral Square surrounds a graceful Cuban Baroque church, today more known for the nightlife on its plaza than the services inside. Religion is once again legal here, says Daniel, but few are Catholic these days. We return for lobster dinner (\$12) under the stars, after exploring the narrow surrounding streets, seduced by the live music performed by gents in straw hats in every bar and café.

We wandered to Plaza San Francisco the next evening for more seafood and tunes. By day the grand plaza—once a slave market and headquarters of the sugar trade—was pulsing with street troupes sashaying along on stilts. Inside the church, now a concert space, young cellists rehearsed a string quartet.

Following the music once again, we headed for a couple of Hemingway haunts, starting with the Pepto-pink Floridita, the hotel where he slept and sucked down daiquiris. Next, the livelier Bodegita, where fans of Papa clamber to the rooftop bar to sample his favorite mojito under his portrait, heeding his motto, inscribed on the wall—Carague con su peso (Carry your own weight)—amid signed photos of devotees like Harry Belafonte. As the band played the obligatory “Guantamera,” we scrawled our own names among the hundreds on the walls.

Hemingway isn’t buried in Cristobal Colon Cemetery, but his favorite bartender is, according to Octavio, who imparts this and other spicy gossip as we tour the fantastic marble mausoleums of the 144-acre cemetery. (Namesake Columbus was later ferried back to Spain.) Will Fidel be buried here, we ask? “It’s a mystery,” Octavio intones with drama.

“Spicy” might be the polite adjective for the decades of Mafia rule, during which the iconic Hotel Nacional was Ground Zero. Today we head there for a performance of the venerable Buena Vista Social Club, whose close harmony is rivaled by a pair of closer-fitting dancers—he in ice-cream suit and fedora, she of the never-ending legs.

Havana’s art scene is just as out-there as its music. We feasted our eyes at the Taller de Serigrafia, a workshop of graphic artists turning out arresting, modern prints. Then we followed Omar, who guided us through the classy Bellas Artes Museum, tracing Cuban art from the era of the conquistadors to, well, tomorrow.

“Cuban artists were never isolated,” he explains as he glides from Impressionists to the Picasso-like Cuban “Guernica” and avant works of gay painter Raul Martinez, whispering a wink-wink warning—“There’s going to be a scandal!”—to introduce a whirl of openly erotic works. Photo-realism took their place in the ’70s, “when we lost contact with the outside world during the special period and looked inward for our social identity.” Finally, a Pop rendering of Che Guevara a la Warhol’s Marilyn Monroe.

Art of a different, and no less exciting, sort blooms in working-class neighborhoods, too, in projects like Colorado Mi Bari, initiated by activist-artists like our guide, Mario, a young ex-con who’s turned his life around as a rap musician (“only good words”). Together they cleaned out a garbage dump and installed a center to teach kids art and music. They also filled the

streets with found-art sculptures (think: tire rims) and flamboyant murals celebrating life. In another neighborhood center, six-year-old ballerinas twirled onstage for us, followed by young mimes and heartthrobs-in-training, crooning about *amor*.

At the opposite end of the social spectrum, eminent ceramicist Jose Fuster not only transformed his house in the classy Jaimanitas neighborhood into an Alice in Wonderland collage of cheeky mosaics, but also transformed many of his neighbors’ walls.

Rebel Afro-Cuban artist Salvadore Gonzales lives deep in the hood, where his home, and art, honors the Orichos (gods) of the African Santorio religion with altars and portraits. We wave “hola” to the guru himself, smoking a cigar with his buddies. Sunday afternoon is Rumba Day on the street, so we shake it with the locals.

It’s all part of the people-to-people deal, which continues as we drive into the countryside to visit a tobacco grower, who teaches us to dip cigars into a glass of rum, then on to an organic farm, a practice favored by Fidel, supplying produce to government enterprises.

Passing horse-drawn carts—the transportation of choice on the highway, where hitchhikers line the pavement—we approach Santa Clara, a town where Che pitched battle and is buried, close to a mammoth memorial statue. The sleepy town square, dating from 1689, boasts a gracious Spanish mansion, now Museum of Decorative Arts, complete with original crystal chandeliers and mahogany furnishings. Beside it stands the frilly Opera House with its tiered balconies, gorgeous as any in Italy.

We trundle on to Remedios, a town where time has hardly ticked since its founding in 1514, anchored by a Baroque cathedral and its gaudy, gold-paved altar. Although Christianity is not the forte here, December 25 nonetheless is. That marks the 24-hour finale of Pandares, a festival in which two neighborhoods vie for top honors in fantastic float-making, a la Mardi Gras. We visit a workshop where volunteer doctors, architects, taxi drivers and who-all are laboring with plywood, Styrofoam and millions of colored lights to complete their secret display for the big day, which concludes with fireworks and a grand party.

Okay—so Canadians head for the beach. Well, for our final day, we did, too—toasting at a resort where the waves lapped in time to the rumba as the rum flowed on. □



(From top) Cuba’s Capitolio; 1950’s autos in pristine condition rule the roads; Fresh produce is in short supply in Cuba. Photos by Carla Waldemar

SIDE BAR

Homophobia was once the norm, but it’s dying a quick death. Gay tourists are welcome, especially at the beach resorts of Vendado. Havana boasts a lively Pride Parade. Americans must visit via a people-to-people program, offered by many tour operators, such as my choice, YMT (ymtvacations.com), the most economical of those I researched. You’ll need a visa, which they supply in Miami, where the tour originates. Credit cards are not accepted, but American dollars are good for tips and vendors, although cafes and taxis prefer the tourist peso. Cuba is clean, safe and oh-so-friendly. Get there before casual travel becomes legal and Starbucks and Radissons ruin the scene.



Photo courtesy of Ouie Pierre



PAGE 38 ~ VET Q&A

Photo by Sharon Montrose



Photo by Jim Gallop

~
OUR
FURRY FRIENDS
ISSUE
~



PAGE 32 ~ MEET OUIE PIERRE



Photo by George Caswell



Photo by BD Portraits Photography Studio



Photo by Patrick Nau Photography



Photo by Patrick Nau Photography

PAGE 36 ~ PATRICK NAU PHOTOGRAPHY



Photo by Patrick Nau Photography



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MEET OUIE PIERRE by Andy Lien

Ouie Pierre is one hot dog. He's been in ads around the world and lives in Minneapolis with his daddies. Always ready with a killer-cute look or witty BOL (Bark Out Loud) comment, you can follow him on Twitter at @OuiePierre or find him on Facebook. This fresh French Bulldog is worth keeping an eye on.

Photo by BD Portraits Photography Studio

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

My name is Ouie Pierre, I'm an AKC registered purebred French Bulldog.

HOW DO YOU PRONOUNCE IT?

It's pronounced oooo-eeee pee air.

HOW DID YOU GET YOUR NAME?

L'ouie means "hearing" in French, which is apropos since I have such big ears!

NICKNAMES?

Daddies sometimes tell people I'm a French poop-n-chew...or they call me MonkeyButt!

WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

Inver Grove Heights Animal Clinic. I still go there for all my appointments and they still remember me!

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

I'm 4.5 years old in 2-legged years...31.5 if you wanna go that 7-year thing regarding dogs. I've also heard people tease my daddy that I have the legs of a 2-year-old dog since I get carried around so much.

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

I live in a condo just across the river from Downtown Minneapolis. I love seeing the sunset over the buildings (except during the fireworks—they're too loud for me but it's amazing to sit in the living room and have them fill our view).

WHO DO YOU LIVE WITH?

I live with my two daddies, Jason and John. I get to socialize with all my fur-friends that live in my building and in the neighborhood.

CAREER?

I mostly spend my days sleeping, but often find myself doing photo shoots and hanging out on sets! I haven't decided what I want to be when I grow up...but an only child is certainly one of them!

MOST INTERESTING THING YOU'VE DONE FOR YOUR JOB?

I got to do an advertising campaign for the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas resort (it was a billboard in Vegas and was in *W*, *Esquire*, *Vanity Fair*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Bon Appetit*, *The New Yorker*, *Wired*, etc), and there were thousands of

cakes and cookies in the pent-house...but Daddy wouldn't let me try them. I did get some of my kibble and some strawberries. Afterward, Daddy brought me down to the slots—for luck—and he won a couple jackpots! I just did a Minnesota Lottery Money Machine TV commercial. The money was blowing all over and Daddy held me tight as he jumped around trying to grab the money. You might be seeing my face on some Davanni's billboards soon, also!

MOST EXOTIC PLACE YOU'VE TRAVELED?

We brachycephalic dogs (short muzzle and flat face) are no longer allowed to fly under the plane in cargo...so, luckily, I'm small enough to fit in a carrier under the seat of the plane and keep Daddy company on his journeys. I've been to L.A. and Long Beach a handful of times; Las Vegas; Vero Beach, Florida; and up to Northern Wisconsin and Northern Minnesota.

WHERE DO YOU STAY WHEN YOUR DADDIES GO OUT OF TOWN?

If they are both gone, I stay with Auntie Peggy. She has a big fenced-in yard which is very different than my usual routine of sitting in the hallway, waiting for the elevator, and then going out! If one daddy is home, then I get lunch-time snuggle breaks from Auntie Beth, Auntie Julie Ann, or Auntie Lisa!!

FRONT SEAT OR BACK SEAT?

The second day Daddy brought me home, he had a death in the family and we jumped in the car and drove for four hours to Northern Wisconsin. We bonded as I slept curled up in his lap. I like to think I helped him navigate in his time of need, also. So now it's usually the front seat, but he puts the back down in the Jeep so I have a bed and space to run around in the car if I want. I also make friends with all the people at the drive-ups...sometimes I scare them at first, but then usually get a smile and a treat.

WHERE'S YOUR FAVORITE PLACE TO GO FOR A WALK IN THE TWIN CITIES?

I love walking just outside our front door, along the river by St.

Anthony Main. There are always other friends, runners, a horse-drawn carriage, festivals, and lots going on down there.

BEST PLACE TO MARK TERRITORY?

There is a spot over at the U of M across from the Dairy Queen that has amazingly long soft grass... Daddies get their riDQulous treats and I leave one for the groundskeeper.

BEST FRIENDS?

Well there is my G'ma's dog, Sassy Cooper (though she is old and crabby and only likes people... what am I? Chopped liver?), and my friends Lee Roy the mini-dachshund, Ginger from Ollu, Atticus, Bogey, Coco, Peanut, Abbey, Ozzie and Lola. Those are just some of my fur-friends...for four-legged the list is tooooooo long. I kinda like to put a smile on everyone's face!!

WHAT DO YOU ALWAYS SAY? ANY PHRASES OR QUOTES THAT ARE SO OUIE PIERRE?

I coined the term "BOL" for "Bark Out Loud" for my Facebook posts. And I usually sign everything "xx oop"—because our time is shorter here on Earth—we are generally here to share our love.

FAVORITES: MUSICIAN?

I rode in the elevator with the wonderful Olivia Newton-John and Daddy recognized her by her voice...Daddy's version of "I Honestly Love You" sounds nothing like hers. She has a doggie, also! I love to listen to old R & B with Daddy; Dee Dee Warwick, Loleatta Holloway, Esther Phillips, etc...I also have a lot of Laura Branigan, Lisa Stansfield, Tanita Tikaram, Wendy Matthews, and Ingrid Chavez on my iPod.

TELEVISION SHOW?

Daddy says I love all the shows on the USA Network, but I think I generally sleep thru most of them. That is, until a commercial with an animal in it comes on... then I am up and scratching and barking at the TV. Gotta protect my home and my Daddies.

MINNEAPOLIS OR ST. PAUL?

Oh, I love all the Twin Cities and surrounding 'burbs. But if I had to pick one, Minneapolis, of course; that is where I have my lifetime dog license.

PLACE TO CURL UP AND NAP?

If I cannot find some rays of sun in our house, then either of Daddies' laps is a perfect alternative (it's actually my first choice—but I gotta keep them in line).

FACEBOOK OR TWITTER?

Both, actually! I have been posting photos and giving birthday wishes on Facebook for a couple of years. I'm just trying to get the hang of this Twitter thingy—good thing I have lots of free time during the day.

SPORTS PLAYER?

I met Christian Ponder in Uptown last summer—he is a handsome one! I also met Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and he called me a little critter—a lion would be a little critter compared to him. I also met some of the Vikings Cheerleaders and they were nice.

PSYCHIC?

Ruth Lordan is a friend of Daddy's and she comes over and we chat. She re-iterates how much I love them.

TV PERSONALITY?

Chris Shaffer from WCCO is a fun guy!! I got to be the "on the spot" photo for Father's Day one year. His lovely wife Gloria brought their three daughters to hang out with me and now they have their very own cutie patootie puppy named Bailey.

HOBBIES?

I enjoy going to the Room & Board Outlet almost every weekend. My pal Marilyn has a bag of my treats in her pouch ("treats" again...I'm starting to think it's really just my regular food). I get lots of kisses and pets from all the great people who work there. I also make my daddies go to Estate Sales (NOT garage sales... one daddy says there is a BIG difference) and I help sniff out great deals. The Estate Sales people are always so sweet and say they look forward to seeing me! I like to sit in my mesh tent and watch daddies play tennis. I think at first they thought I would be the perfect candidate for fetching their errant balls. We had a talk and now they just promise to try to play better since that was not going to work out for me—all that running and sweating and fetching.

Continued on page 34 ➔



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~ PET ISSUE ~



MEET OUIE PIERRE

WHAT'S YOUR LIFE ASPIRATION?

Everyday that I make sure my daddies start and end the day with a kiss and a smile lets me know I'm in the right place. I tried out to be a Therapy Dog but the mean lady said I couldn't pass because I would not lay down flat on command. Hey, I just don't wanna do that stupid trick...oh, well. I have visited a few nursing homes and hospitals on my own. Old people are good scratchers, too!!!! I also want to do more helping rescue dogs find homes. I have a line of blank greeting cards that I have donated for fundraisers and raffles. There are so many wonderful four-leggers out there that need someone to love them—they just might end up rescuing you!

OUIE PIERRE'S PICK - RESTAURANTS:

BIG shout-out to all the pet-friendly restaurants that I get to eat at: I LOVE to eat at Rachel's NE, Wilde Roast Cafe, Kafe 421, Cupcake, The Newsroom, the Aster, Key's, YUM!, D'Amico, Davanni's, Einstein's Bagel, Baja Sol Tortilla Grill and, of course, The Bulldog NE.

OUIE PIERRE'S PICK - HOTELS:

In Minneapolis, I spent a week at the Graves 601, and the people at the Fairmont Miramar in Santa Monica, California, always remember my name. The Costa d'Este in Vero Beach, Florida, and, of course, the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas are both wonderful.



Photo by BD Portraits Photography Studio

~ PET ISSUE ~



MEET QUITE PIERRE

WHAT'S ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?

I was friends on Facebook with a dog named Bingo in Canada who had a lick-it list...we sent him some local treats for him to enjoy. I have had such fun adventures, I am grateful for all my time here, and just want to love love love!! I just thought of one thing and that would be to find a cure for my allergies! Boy, that would be nice! I guess retiring to Florida sounds fun, too! Oh...and I am working to end black dog discrimination!!!! Two of the local animal agencies always say black dogs can't model—they don't want a black dog...if only you were cream or blonde... too hard to light...well, my daddy says to rent a few more lights or hire any of these awesome photographers who were quite capable of taking my picture!! I have been photographed by Nadav Kander, arguably one of the top shooters in the world—he has also photographed the President of the United States!! BOL and a SNAP.



Photo by BD Portraits Photography Studio



Photo by Jim Gallop



Photo by BD Portraits Photography Studio



Photo by BD Portraits Photography Studio

~ PET ISSUE ~



MEET OUÏE PIERRE

WHAT'S FOR SUPPER?

Blue Buffalo Wild Salmon, I LOVE it!! Yet, somehow, all the treats I get look and taste exactly like my dinner kibble. Hmmm. I smell something fishy here!



Photo by Chad Holder



Photo by Chad Holder



Photo by George Caswell



Photo by Nadav Kander for Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas Resort

JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF WRONG



Photo by Jason & Ann. Photo courtesy of Ouïe Pierre



Photo courtesy of Ouïe Pierre

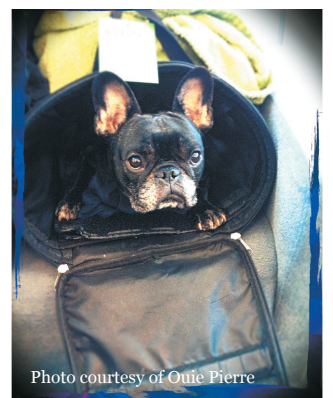


Photo courtesy of Ouïe Pierre



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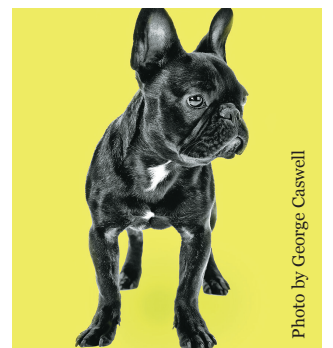


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VET Q&A: DR. DAN ANDERSON

by Andy Lien

Lavender will run a Vet Q&A in our Pet Issues as well as online. If you have a question you'd like answered by a Veterinarian, email it to editor@lavendermagazine.com.

Q: I was thinking of getting my dog a haircut but the cold temperatures worry me. I've read that sometimes the length and difference between hair and fur might matter in how cold a dog gets. He only goes outside for walks and then spends the rest of the time indoors. He's getting a bit scraggly, so he'll need a cut sooner than later. Any advice?

A: It is important to continue grooming your dog through the winter months. Dirty, matted hair is not just unsightly, it's also uncomfortable and loses some of its ability to keep your dog warm. Long hair on the feet can collect snow and retain ice-melt. This can cause discomfort and cracking of the foot pads. If your dog's hair is not too matted, your groomer may be able to brush out the coat and trim the hair, leaving it longer than in the summer months. If the matting cannot be brushed out, your dog will need a shorter cut. For dogs who spend the vast majority of time indoors, this is not a problem. There are many breeds of dogs who have very short coats (for example, dachshunds or weimaraners) who still enjoy short periods of outdoor time in winter. If you plan on taking longer walks, or spending an extended time outdoors, consider a sweater and booties. Dogs who spend the majority of their time outside should also continue to be groomed. They should be brushed regularly to prevent matting, and bathed if the coat becomes dirty. The coat should be allowed to dry thoroughly before being returned outdoors.

Q: My cat keeps licking her fur off her belly. I've been looking into allergies and checking to see if her skin is okay there and everything looks fine. Should I be worried or do you think this might just be something she does for a while



and then stops? Do cats have stress?

A: Whenever I see a cat who is licking off her fur, I immediately think of three things: fleas, allergies, and stress. The first thing to do is determine if your cat has fleas. This is especially important in cats who spend time outdoors. Comb the hair with a fine-toothed comb, looking for fleas and or flea "dirt" (which actually is their droppings!). It does not take many fleas to cause itching, so they may be hard to find. If you find fleas, or see fine, black particles in the coat, call your veterinarian for advice on flea control.

Allergies are fairly common in cats. They can be caused by just about anything in the environment and can even be caused by a sensitivity to ingredients in food. Allergies can cause hair loss, scabs, redness, and excessive grooming. These symptoms can be seasonal or may be year-round. If you suspect your cat has allergies, consult your veterinarian. They may prescribe anti-his-

tamines or corticosteroids to relieve symptoms, and may suggest a diet change.

Stress can also cause inappropriate obsessive grooming. You may simply see hair loss, but some cats will lick enough to cause abrasions. Hair loss from stress may be intermittent. If you suspect your cat suffers from stress, try to determine the cause. Has there been an addition to the household—feline, canine, or human? Has there been a change in the amount you interact with your cat? Are there outdoor cats contributing to stress levels? If you are not able to identify and correct the cause, consult your veterinarian to help rule out a medical cause. Some cats will require anti-anxiety medications to help them through a difficult time.

Q: I'm going to move in with my significant other who has a labrador. We both have dogs, my terrier is six and the labrador is eight. The terrier thinks he's

Continued on page 43 ➔

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~ PET GIFT GUIDE ~

by Andy Lien



2 Dirty Paws Footbath
I Love Pet Head's Dirty Paws Footbath is your portable solution for cleaning your pet's paws in a compact, contained kit. Fill with water, dip paw in, and dry with microfiber towel. Repeat. \$10.99
www.wag.com

1 Ouie Pierre's Pick - Accessory:
I'm often seen rockin' a rainbow scarf in support of my two dads. They love each other--so what? It's all good to me. Pictured here, available at for \$3.00-\$5.00 on Amazon.com and at various retailers.



Photo by BD Portraits Photography Studio

3 Ouie Pierre's Pick - Beauty Parlor:
My friends at OLLU Dog Wash along Main Street really know how to spoil a guy! I stop in there all the time for treats. Then, when my daddy leaves me for nail trims and grooming, I know there will be a few more treats involved. Here I am at OLLU's Howloween Party.
www.olludogwash.com



Photo by Joe Michl

4 Minnepawpolis Shirts
Pampered Pooch Playground
These locally designed and printed t-shirts are only available at Pampered Pooch Playground and feature the Minnepawpolis slogan on the front. The shirts are available in rainbow colors and solid blue. \$20.00
www.pamperedpoochplayground.com/shirts (for sale onsite or online)



5 Ouie Pierre's Pick - Chew Toy:
I don't like to leave home without my Nylabones or my bacon hand. For some reason, I really think hard plastic is delicious. Nylabones available at various retailers.

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~ PET GIFT GUIDE ~

by Andy Lien



6 PetFlow.com Pet Food Delivery

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7 Ouie Pierre's Pick - Outfit:

A must-have for any four-legged here in this climate is the Puppia hooded jacket with the faux fur lining. At first, I misheard Daddy and thought he said it was gopher...not faux fur...and I kinda freaked out. Pictured here, Puppia Coup d'Etat Parka available at various retailers.



8 Fugly Friends Homemade Toys

Bubbly Paws Dog Wash, 3730 Grand Way, St. Louis Park, Minnesota
Fugly Friends are homemade dog toys and each one comes with a unique name (Uneeta Tweezer shown here--see those brows?!). These durable toys are all one-of-a-kind and feature a fortune on the inside in case they are broken open. \$17.00

www.bubblypaws.com (for sale in store)



9 Ouie Pierre's Pick - Recreation:

We also go for bike rides now that I have my own Burley Tail Wagon. I get to see all the sights--only backwards. \$399.00

www.rei.com



10 Bowser Beer

Bubbly Paws Dog Wash, 3730 Grand Way, St. Louis Park, Minnesota

Bowser Beer for Dogs is the perfect accessory to any gathering. Available in Cocadoodle Brew and Beefy Brown Ale, this dog beer will make your pooch the hit of the party.

\$2.00/ bottle or \$10.00/6 pack

www.bubblypaws.com (for sale in store)

the boss but the labrador isn't about to let the terrier be the boss of his territory. How do we make this work?

A: Congratulations! Combining canines can present a challenge, though the vast majority of dogs will work it out on their own. Dogs are by nature pack animals and enjoy the company of other dogs, and, of course, their humans. They look to their leaders—that should be you and your partner—for cues on how to behave in a given situation. If the pair are being aggressive toward one another, do not leave them unsupervised. Crate them or leave them in separate rooms when you must be gone. Make sure that you spend plenty of time with the dogs together. Make their time together fun; go for long walks, play with new toys, etc. Reinforce good behavior with praise and small food treats. If play becomes too aggressive, have your dogs take a time-out until they are calm. Leave leashes on both dogs if you are concerned they may end up in a fight. Do not attempt to separate fighting dogs with your hands or you may very well be the one bitten! Some situations are much more complex and require profession-

al help. Consult your veterinarian if you see no improvement in the situation. They will have more specific advice for you or may refer you to a veterinary behaviorist for further assistance. Good Luck!

Q: My dog has bad breath. What can I do at home to help? How often should a dog's teeth be cleaned?

A: Bad breath is an indicator that bacteria are growing in the plaque and/or calculus in the mouth. Plaque is a thin film that naturally forms on teeth. Bacteria begin to grow in the plaque, and along with the enzymes contained in saliva, cause the plaque to harden and form thicker and thicker deposits of calculus. The best way to keep your dog's mouth healthy is to daily remove plaque before it hardens to form calculus. Brushing the teeth with a pet toothpaste is the most effective way to remove plaque. These toothpastes come in several flavors, like chicken, beef, or seafood, and many pets look forward to having their teeth brushed. If this is not possible, pet oral rinses are the next best thing. Antibacterial and tartar control rawhide chews are also very helpful. Den-

tal diets contain abrasives to help reduce the amount of plaque and calculus buildup. Despite your best efforts, calculus will eventually form in the mouth. Deposits of calculus will cause recession of the gums and formation of pockets around the tooth roots if left unchecked. These infected teeth are painful, and can lead to serious health problems. A recent study showed that 80% of 3 year old dogs and cats had dental disease. I recommend yearly evaluation of your dog's teeth by a veterinarian. Most dogs and cats should have their teeth professionally cleaned at least once annually to remove calculus buildup, and evaluate the health of the teeth. X-rays of diseased teeth should be taken to determine a course of treatment. This will require general anesthesia to be done properly. February is National Pet Dental Month. Many veterinary clinics will have special promotions during this time. □

Dr. Dan Anderson has been practicing Veterinary Medicine since 1991 and can be found at Larpenteur Animal Hospital in St. Paul. He has two chihuahuas, Edith and Olive.



~ PET ISSUE ~



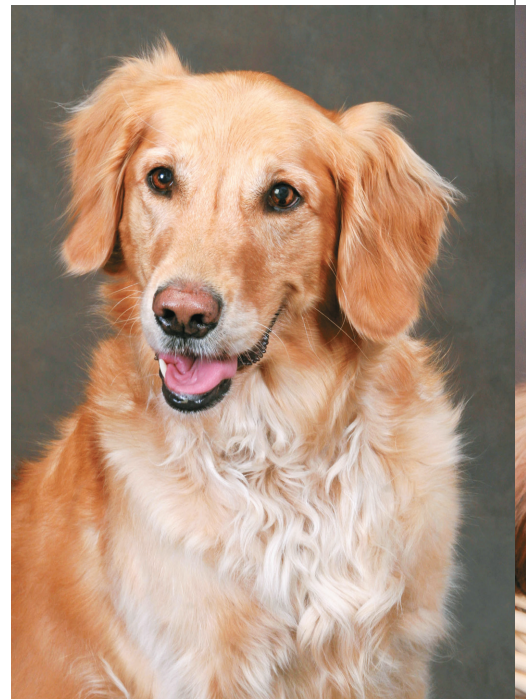
Tami and Teri Todd with their trio.

Patrick Nau: Top Dog In Pet Photography

by Kathleen Watson

As a professional photographer for over 32 years, Patrick Nau knows how to capture seemingly fleeting moments—turning the ephemeral into the eternal—one photograph at a time. But recently, Nau has begun to offer a more unique type of photography: portraits of beloved and cherished pets. As one of the premier pet photographers in the Twin Cities, Nau works to capture the charm and personality of animals in his classic, timeless portraits.

Nau was inspired to change his main clientele due to a well-timed photography magazine that arrived in the mail seven years ago. Nau flipped through the magazine and landed on an article about pet photography. He was stunned by what he saw—the photography was simply horrible. He recalls, “It was the worst published work I had ever seen in a professional magazine, and, to tell you the truth, it got me really mad. I said, ‘I could do better than this, but I can’t do it tomorrow.’” The abysmal photography inspired Nau to fill the





Sheila Fitzgerald and Sandy Schmidt.

void he found in quality pet photography.

Dismayed by the decreasing need for professional portrait photographers and with business dwindling due to the upsurge in digital cameras, Nau saw an opportunity to turn his business around. Nau took advantage of his studio's location next to the Minnehaha Animal Hospital and his friendship with the owner, and he asked to practice his skills on the animals. Pet owners received photographs of their beloved pets, and Nau got the practice he needed in order to become the successful pet photographer that he is today.

After six months of practice, Nau felt ready to call himself a pet photographer. Shortly after, another opportunity came his way—this time in the form of a partnership with Chuck and Don's Pet Food Outlet. The business deal has been dually beneficial, with Nau offering in-store pet portrait days. "They're truly one of the main reasons I'm still in business and am now one of the most well-known pet photographers in the Twin Cities."

Nau notes the joys of working with pets, especially the fast-paced process. He allows the animals and their owners to get comfortable in the studio before the photo session begins. In order to keep the animals' attention, Nau will use noisemakers or make noises himself. He also tells his clients, "My two-fold philosophy is that I have endless patience, and nothing is ever a problem...if the dog goes to the bathroom or they're running around...remember, it's never a problem. My job is to get the portrait no matter what."

Along with his endless patience, Nau makes sure to photograph the animals to reflect their personality and their breed. While puppy photographs may contain a cute setting or expression, strong breeds like Shepherds will have a more regal feeling. Nau finds it very important to properly represent the breed well.

In order to prepare for a session, Nau suggests that active dogs get some exercise and dogs be brushed out or groomed. A typical photo session with Nau takes about two hours and includes the portrait session, a short break, and a viewing of the photographs. Clients then choose their favorite photographs and are able to order prints on the spot. Nau notes that the viewing session is often the most fun because people can't decide which photos they love the best. "My job," he says, "is to make it hard to decide."

In seven years, Nau's photography focus has changed to mostly focus on pet portraits. Though he still frequently does weddings, family portraits, and senior pictures, Nau's real passion lies with capturing the personality and memory of human's best friend. Thanks to his patience, passion, and talent, countless families will be able to honor and remember their beloved pets for years to come. For more information, visit www.patricknau.com. □



LEXUS GS 350

Photos by Randy Stern

HOW DO you succeed in a recovering economy?

If you are at a comfortable income range and have survived several mergers, acquisitions, and rounds of layoffs, you might be considered a success. One might even call you a survivor. You may be entrenched in middle-to-upper management, a top salesperson, or a high-ranking official in some public or non-profit sector role.

No matter where you are in that stratum, congratulations. You almost made it. Now, reward yourself, if you have not done so already.

It is easy to reward oneself when it comes down to premium automobiles. They announce your arrival with enough flash and style to turn everyone's head as you roll along Hennepin, Grand, Excelsior, or Lexington.

The providers of these automobiles know this all too well. Last year, BMW and Mercedes-Benz sold a combined 450,000-plus automobiles, with the nod to BMW as the best-selling premium brand in the U.S.A. Being the top dog amongst luxury brands carries quite a weight as being a stylemaker, an influencer, or just an object of one's desire.

Lexus used to be the top-selling luxury brand in America. Several quality and safety issues affecting its parent company, Toyota, along with a lineup of pretty uninspired ve-

hicles, prevented the Oval-L to remain on top after the global financial crisis hit our shores. A perfect storm of issues for what are essentially pretty good vehicles.

The question was asked—perhaps for the umpteenth time since before its debut in 1989—how could Lexus outdo its German rivals? How does a luxury brand come back in its most critical market? What kind of style and panache would Lexus need to exude to match and outdo the Germans?

At the 2011 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, Lexus answered by debuting its most critical model in its lineup: the new GS.

The GS had been in the Lexus lineup dating back to the early 1990s as their rear-wheel-drive mid-sized luxury sports sedan entry. As athletic as its moves, styling was never its strongest point. Interior room had always been tighter than its rivals; namely the BMW 5-Series, Mercedes-Benz E-Class, and Audi A6. For the new model, Lexus went back to the drawing board to not only make it better looking, but a better package overall.

Lexus may have succeeded this time around.

It starts with a new look for the brand, the “spindle grille.” The evolution of the new look came from not only several concepts that toured the auto show circuit for the last several

years, but from hints first seen on the hybrid CT hatchback and the LFA supercar. The result is a starting point that dictates where the GS is going in terms of combining the sports and luxury aspects of the car.

Thanks to the spindle grille, Lexus finally has a distinctive look for today's discriminating consumer.

The aggressiveness of the spindle grille continues the GS's theme with its solid side profile leading to a nicely finished rear end. Compared to previous generations of the GS, this one looks the part it was originally intended without having to resort to resembling its rivals. The best way to describe the new GS is a synergy of elegance and muscle-bound brawn.

As much as the exterior is a complete step forward, the interior of the GS will blow your mind. Your eyes are immediately fixated on the large 12.3-inch center screen. This is where the infotainment and telematics systems reside, including Lexus Enform. The wide screen also houses readout and specific controls for the climate system and other vehicle functions. You access all of these functions through the Remote Touch controller on the center console next to the gear lever. This mouse-like controller has been enhanced for the GS as the swivel also functions at the click button.

Everything else is typical Lexus: wonderful

displays, soft touch materials, great switches, knobs, and buttons, and a smaller-diameter steering wheel. The latter is a recent development for newer Lexus models, though it may seem complicated to understand for anyone outside of the brand. Once you get the hang of the Remote Touch controller and the plethora of buttons, knobs, and switches throughout the GS, you would come appreciate how well Lexus truly crafted this mid-sized premium sports sedan for the driver.

The driver's seat is an absolute treat. Not only do you get the normal power adjustments for rake, recline, and height, you also get power adjustments for the upper and lower lumbar supports, the bolsters, and the front thigh support. The driver can choose to be comfortable or simply supportive. Sporty black perforated leather is lavished on the GS seats for four normal-sized adults. Trunk space is decent, but it would take some creative packing with the wheel wells protruding onto the oddly shaped cargo hold.

The idea behind the GS is to offer more than ever before. This is true for the audio system that goes along with the Luxury package. Twelve speakers dot throughout the cabin channeling everything from HD Radio, SiriusXM satellite radio, and the tunes on your Bluetooth-connected mobile device. You can always utilize the USB connection inside the center console for your devices as well.

The sound that came from the audio system was equally rivaled by the sound coming from the integrated twin exhaust ports at the rear bumper. There is a distinctive rumble and burble that would come from a sports-tuned 3.5litre V6 engine, a staple of the Lexus lineup (and other Toyota products). With 306 horsepower on tap, the GS is capable of going from 0-to-60MPH on 5.7 seconds. Needless to say, the V6 feels like you can actually do that. It is quick and responsive to the throttle. It bears repeating how lovely the soundtrack from the V6 is when you step on the accelerator.

Unlike its rivals, the GS relies on a six-speed automatic gearbox to control the V6's power

band. Six ratios are all you need, really, because this transmission actually works as intended. You can choose to switch gears yourself at the shifter or with paddles on the steering wheel. Or, you can simply leave it in Drive and still feel the power as it goes through the gears. This tester came with all-wheel drive—a must in our parts since the standard driveline is through the rear wheels.

There is a trick to this powerful machine. On the center console is the Drive Mode Select knob. It works to whatever mood you wish to be in while behind the wheel of the GS. It starts off in Normal, which is a combination of all good things the GS offers. If you want to leisurely go about your way, the Eco mode eases a lot of the vehicle's settings—including the climate control-to save fuel along the way. Flip the knob to the right, and you are in Sport S mode. Sport S enables the engine to breathe deeper and change the algorithms of the transmission for quicker shifts.

Flip the knob to the right one more time, and you are in Sport S+ mode. This setting tightens up the suspension, the steering response, and the gear changes. The result is a well-tuned, well-oiled machine that is fun to throw in a curve. The interesting part to Sport S+ mode was minimal fuel economy loss while the driving dynamics settings are at their tightest.

In any mode, the GS still combines the best of all worlds. The suspension was already reworked to minimize roll and keep the car stable through the curves. Only Sport S+ maximizes suspension feel and keeps body roll near zero. Normally, when you stiffen the suspension, you lose ride quality and comfort. The GS is very consistent in every mode, keeping the overall ride stable and comfortable. You do feel some road imperfections even in Eco mode, but not enough to send shockwaves through the cabin.

In all other modes, I found the steering to be a bit soft in feel, though turning reaction is quite good. There is some play in Eco mode at the wheel. Sport S+ resolves this issue providing a tighter and sharper feel at every turn.

Braking is quite good with balanced response in every mode. Panic stops are to the point without drama from the system and the pedal.

One does not expect great fuel economy out of a premium mid-sized sports sedan with over 300 horsepower. You may even consider that it would be relative to its competition. That was exactly what the GS yielded, averaging 21.1MPG. If you are concerned about fuel economy and like the GS, it does come in a Hybrid edition, the GS 450h, which takes the 3.5litre V6 and tacks on the Lexus Synergy Drive motor onto it.

The price of admission is what you would expect from a comprehensively equipped car in its class. The base price of the GS is \$47,795 with just rear-wheel drive and no packages. The Luxury Package on this AWD tester sent the sticker price upwards to \$60,990.

The GS simply returns Lexus back into the thick of the premium automobile wars. The result has been an increase in sales for Toyota's luxury brand—a good thing if you are not a fan of the class-leading Germans. As an offshoot of the GS, the new Lexus spindle grille has made its way onto four new or revised models this model year alone: The ES sedan, the RX crossover, the LX large SUV, and the flagship LS sedan. Last month in Detroit, the 2014 IS sports sedan was introduced with a more aggressive and radical interpretation of the spindle front end.

However, the spindle grille, a new body and interior, along with improved driving dynamics, may find some premium mid-sized sedan buyers a bit puzzled. Perhaps, they would find the Lexus as complicated as the Mercedes-Benz E-Class, BMW 5-Series, Audi A6, or Infiniti M? Maybe it is a bit too gadget-laden or too polarizing a design when compared to the standard bearers in its class?

For \$61,000, this Lexus may be the alternative to the Germans in this stratosphere. Come to think of it, if you do not mind the gadgetry and geekery of the Lexus, this is a good one to get. Perhaps this Lexus will be your hedge through economy recovery. ■





Community First

I RECENTLY interviewed the three co-owners of Twin Cities Leather, the new leather store in town. Karri Plowman is the head designer; Luke Wallrich handles finances, merchandising and event planning; and Tynan Fox is working with outreach, activism and education.

How did Twin Cities Leather come to be?

Karri Plowman: I had previously worked in another leather store and had left to open my own store and was having several difficulties. Frankly, there was just expertise and things that I needed to help me. And then, Luke—

Luke Wallrich: For my entire life I've been very entrepreneurial, always wanted to have a business of some kind. During discussions last year with some of the leadership of IML [the International Mr. Leather weekend], they said, your city really needs something that can put the community first, that can do something for the community that's worthwhile.

Tynan Fox: Driving back from IML we had a long discussion in the car, and we realized that it's only gonna happen if someone in the community steps up and takes leadership. And we decided that, you know, it's time to be the grownups. It's time for us to take some responsibility.

What do you want Twin Cities Leather to accomplish?

LW: I think our primary goal is "Community First." One of the big ways that we're doing that, of course, is with the Mr. Twin Cities Leather competition. But ultimately, it's to help people discover, explore, enjoy, and fortify their kinky lives.

KP: This is a kink leather store owned by kink leather people for the kink leather community, and that's important to us. And with that comes quality products and great customer service. When our clients come in—and we refer to our customers as clients, because that's how we treat them—we can answer questions that just a sex store couldn't answer. And that client concept means conversations, and purchases, are kept between us and our client.



Karri Plowman, Luke Wallrich, and Tynan Fox. Photo courtesy of Steve Lenius

LW: Our store and workshop are in a small basement location. You come in off the back side of this mixed-use property, a mansion in one of the oldest neighborhoods in Minneapolis. It's also a community space—people can come in and sit and chat. The major hurdle is finding us, but once people know where we are, we're easy to get to, and they like the privacy.

What can people expect when they visit?

TF: First and foremost, you can expect a friendly face. Our company motto is "Community First" for a reason—we want to make sure people are comfortable being able to shop and ask questions and get friendly answers.

LW: We've all been involved in this community for a very long time, even though we're all relatively young individuals.

TF: Between the three of us we've got thirty years of experience.

You'll have a store on the Web, too?

LW: Our current goal is to be online with TwinCitiesLeather.com, a full e-commerce site, by the end of January, 2013.

Talk a bit about the upcoming Mr.

Twin Cities Leather contest.

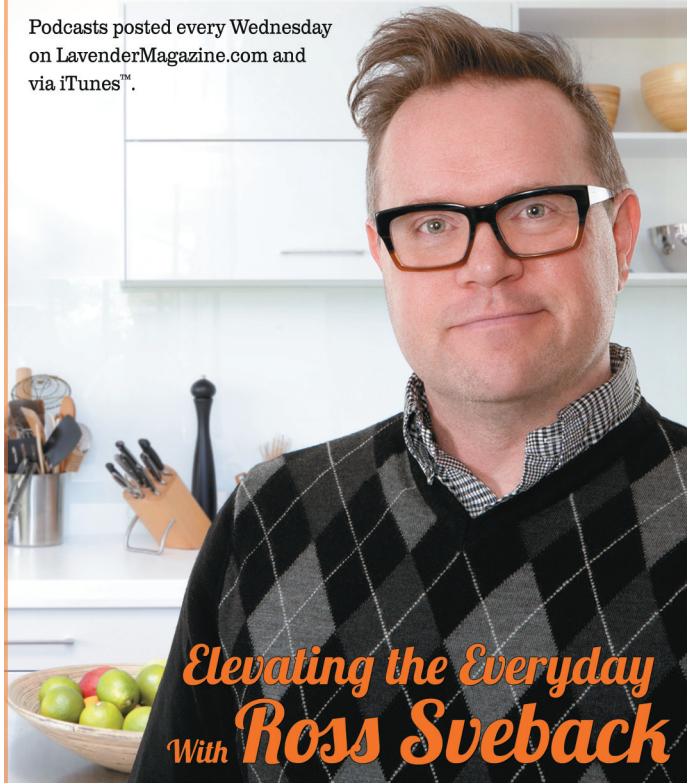
LW: The reason we sponsor the contest, first and foremost, is that we believe the Twin Cities has a kink community that deserves representation and leadership. Contests are one of the ways we elect the leaders of our community, the people who get to go out there and be a focal point for the community.

Derek Harley, Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2012, said in his speech at IML that you have to be a beacon. There are many different ways you can be a beacon in the community, and being a titleholder is certainly one of the ways. We wanted our city to have two of those beacons that people can come to and ask questions, so really we sponsor it for that community reason. And that's why the store itself has the motto or the slogan of "Community First." □

[Twin Cities Leather is located at 300 Clifton Ave. in Minneapolis. Open seven days a week; more info at Facebook.com/TwinCitiesLeather or visit their new e-commerce site at TwinCitiesLeather.com. And check out all the events that make up the Mr. Twin Cities Leather contest weekend, Feb. 15-17 at The Saloon.]

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Freedom to Marry and Priorities

[Transcribed from a voicemail message and used with permission.]

I did what you or someone else said in *Lavender* about contacting Mark Dayton, Tom Bakk, Paul Thissen, and Erin Murphy. Most of them just took messages, but someone answered the phone at Paul Thissen's and she said to me, not empathetically, "Well, we've heard from both sides." And I said, "Well, are you more concerned with holding your seat or voting your conscience?"

I was just thinking back to the 1960s, when we didn't have equal rights for African Americans who were called negroes—and in 1967 a black man and a white woman could not get married until the law was changed—and I got really emotional. I got slightly angry. I don't understand what is going on. The Marriage Amendment was defeated and then they say things like, "Well, we're concerned about what the people in the rural districts say." Well, how do we make progress?

It seems like we've got a lot of work ahead of us, don't we? I talked to these people and I said, "You tackle the budget, but we can tackle other issues at the same time."

MICHAEL WILSON

Marriage and Journalistic Responsibility

As I read the last issue of *Lavender* I became more and more angry that the Twin Cities' leading GLBT publication would choose this time to take a stance that civil unions would be a reasonable compromise to marriage equality. To publish two articles that mention this as a potential concession at the time when the

MN Legislature is about to submit a bill is both irresponsible and potentially damaging to a movement that has never had greater support and momentum.

While I am sure that the author's opinions are shared by others in the community and—quite honestly, not unreasonable—I strongly feel that conceding or settling for civil unions at this time would be short-sighted and serve as a temporary solution at best. With the tide of public sentiment moving more and more in favor of full marriage equality, Minnesota is poised for success in this area and it is my belief that adding the option of civil unions to an already emotionally complex dialogue is counter-productive. I can only hope that the law makers in St. Paul don't interpret the opinion of one man who was given a forum in a GLBT magazine as an endorsement from the community that civil unions are good enough or would be seen as a reasonable alternative to full marriage equality.

The article entitled "What's in a Name" pointed out that if civil unions could be enacted in this legislative session and included all the legal rights and responsibilities of marriage, we should accept that as a success. What is missing from his argument is the difficulty that would arise from administering a second set of policies related to civil unions and the complexity of any form of recognition outside of the Minnesota state government. This is especially relevant considering the decisions related to DOMA pending at the US Supreme Court.

Haven't we learned over time that the concept of "Separate But Equal" simply doesn't work? Having a legal distinction between civil unions and marriage will allow for future policies to only include one or the other definition and for private sector organizations to potentially limit benefits only to people who have participated in "real marriage."

In an attempt to be responsible journalists, I believe that *Lavender* should have at least published an accompanying article outlining the challenges of implementing civil unions or included those challenges in a single article written by a credentialed author with expertise in this area. As it stands, it seems *Lavender's* position would have been to tell Rosa Parks that sitting in the back of the bus was acceptable since she at least got a seat on the bus.

BRIAN GILLIGAN

Response:

I found Brian Gilligan's letter in response to my article "What's in a Name" to be thoughtful, insightful, and raising some key important issues so I want to respond.

I started my series of articles in *Lavender*

based on the enormous shock that nobody in government wanted to fight for same-sex couple recognition, marriage or otherwise. In my interview with Sen. John Marty, I was assured a bill would be introduced by him the first day of the session and as of this writing, it has not. No bill has been introduced by anyone. I have watched with growing concern as the activists in the GLBT community have coalesced around a single theme and without an expressed strategy for getting our committed relationships recognized. Therefore, I've responded with questions and ideas.

Gilligan questions my article on this vital point, "What is missing from his argument is the difficulty that would arise from administering a second set of policies related to civil unions and the complexity of any form of recognition outside of the Minnesota state government."

We have five states which have civil unions and we know Vermont started with civil unions and then granted same-sex couples marriage. It certainly is something to question. Is there a substantive difference? Nothing I've read has suggested civil union status has caused any problems. However, my argument was never against marriage but with the political reality we don't have a coalition large enough to pass it. I don't want to wait ten years or whatever to get a seat on the bus.

You see, that is the problem with his other very good point. "As it stands, it seems *Lavender's* position would have been to tell Rosa Parks that sitting in the back of the bus was acceptable since she at least got a seat on the bus." My point, and not *Lavender's*, is just that. In order to get on the bus we may need to get a seat on the left side, and not the right side of the bus, front or back. Civil union recognition in other states has been with the same benefits and obligations as marriage. At this point we are standing along the side of the road and I'm just not willing to forgo getting on that bus.

Is it a concession to sit next to people in traditional marriages on the bus? Is the idea of "equal" mean we are the "same?" I think not. But, I'm glad to have sparked a discussion. We won't achieve anything by standing quietly and pleading with downcast eyes. We need to make these arguments and make noise. Otherwise, my committed relationship will continue to be legally that of strangers. I don't want to be left in the cold any longer.

BRETT STEVENS



Outreach: A Conversation with Rep. Andrea Kieffer (R)

I WALKED around Cossetta's pensively. I was there to meet with Rep. Andrea Kieffer, R-Woodbury, to talk about the Marriage Amendment. I didn't know exactly what to expect. I'd heard from a contact that she had voted for the Marriage Amendment, but that she regretted it. What I didn't know is if she "regretted" her vote because the amendment lost, or because she felt it wasn't the right thing to do. I wondered what she'd think of my push for same-sex relationship recognition.

It turned out Rep. Kieffer is a delightful and friendly woman, slight in build and very engaging. We exchanged greetings and found seats to have a conversation.

"I didn't get into politics for the social issues," she began our chat. "I got into politics because of fiscal issues and because we just spend too much. I didn't want to touch these issues at all."

I asked her about her vote in favor of the Marriage Amendment, and she was startlingly frank.

"The amendment itself was simply to protect the definition of a long-standing traditional institution, 'marriage.'" Kieffer said. "Unfortunately, the message quickly turned into something negative and that is what my concern was," she said, reflecting the internal conflict of many people. On the one hand, sincere people have a very strong personal belief that marriage is the union of one man and one woman, and on the other hand they recognize that it is not right to use government power to discriminate against people simply because you disagree with their lifestyles.

Clenching and unclenching her fists, Rep. Kieffer talked about the emotions running through the capitol the night of the vote.

"It was so loud outside. There were

people crying and shouting. It was the most emotional night, you won't believe. I was hugging a young man who was crying when they told me it was time to vote."

After the vote, she put on a brave face. To constituents who criticized her position she said, "I told them to vote 'no' and then we'd know. Now we know."

Kieffer remembered knocking on doors when she first ran for office. "I met several women, lesbians, who told me they were fiscally conservative but they didn't feel represented. I thought about how they feel about the issue." There was a bit of a catch in her throat. This subject clearly bothered her.

I asked Kieffer how she felt about same-sex couples being recognized by the state.

"Did you see the movie *Lincoln*?" she asked. "There is a scene where he's explaining how like 'things' should be treated alike. I can't help but think about that scene when this comes up. Back then it was race. Now its gender-based, but it is still about treating people equally." She bumped the sides of her left hand against the table on one side, then on the other, to emphasize that "like" compared with "like" are therefore equal.

Equal treatment matters to Kieffer as much, if not more so, than her personal beliefs about the proper definition of "marriage."

"I do think we should find a way to give all consenting adult couples the same benefits/rights without changing the definition of marriage currently in statute. Gays and lesbian couples are tax-paying citizens in our state being discriminated against under some laws."

"I am a conservative," she added. "I believe individuals have the sovereign right to make decisions about their personal life and property. The state should make that easy—not more difficult—for all Minnesotans wheth-

er I or anyone else agrees with their choices."

Perhaps we had more in common than I had thought. It was something she knew needed fixing and being made right. I brought up the idea of civil unions for Minnesotans. She had obviously discussed it previously. I told her five states currently have civil unions and those laws could be exemplars. She nodded but added: "No one should assume that a paper document guarantees the government will take care of your healthcare or estate planning. My husband and I still had to get living wills, power of attorneys, a trust set up for our daughter who is a vulnerable adult. There are situations that law just doesn't cover."

I agree with her. There is a romanticization of the idea of marriage in the GLBT community. The community tends to talk in terms of "rights" and "benefits," but is less vocal when it comes to "obligations" and "responsibilities" assumed by marriage.

Rep. Kieffer seemed sincerely conflicted about same-sex marriage and her own feelings of equal treatment for people in equal situations. I believe we have a Republican legislator actively listening to us and who is willing to continue the conversation. I don't think she's the only one. That matters.

Reflecting on my interview with Rep. Kieffer, I remembered something from a communications class I had in college years ago. The professor talked about what constituted a "conversation." There are the external parts like the words exchanged back and forth but there is an even more important part. There is the listening and interpreting part and the subsequent response to the other person. It is within that exchange real meaning is conveyed.

I didn't know if Rep. Kieffer and I shared any beliefs when we began talking; however,

Continued on page 52 ➔

by the time the conversation ended, both of us had a greater understanding of the other's positions. We weren't as far apart as I had anticipated. Our conversation had changed us both as any good exchange of ideas should. I think we aren't the only ones affected by these conversations.

As I found from my conversation with Rep. Kieffer, we need to engage in outreach with people we don't think will support us. We need to stick OUR necks out. Then, when we find people on the right who listen to us, we need to listen to them. We all need to appreciate their point of view along with our own.

Right before we parted, I asked Rep. Kieffer about whether she'd support a same-sex marriage bill. She smiled. "You really have to see *Lincoln*. There is this guy who has the [anti-slavery] bill and doesn't want to compromise. In the end, to get passage he does give a little. He didn't get all he wanted but he got almost all of it."

I think I will have to go see *Lincoln*. ■

Carrie Chapman Catt's Winning Plan

by Brett Stevens

CAMPAIGNS NEED strategies for winning support. As we enter into this legislative session, the GLBT community and its advocacy groups need to consider what kind of strategy we will employ. Some are pushing for an all or nothing approach to recognition of same-sex marriage. Others argue we should be willing to compromise to achieve some measure of recognition now. Regardless of the end game, a strategy must be employed.

I tend to look to history to see what strategies have worked and which ones haven't. This doesn't mean a previously successful plan will work in this fight but it does suggest possible approaches. One such successful strategy was that used by Carrie Chapman Catt and women getting the right to vote.

As of 1916, for 68 years, women had been working for their right to vote for their elected representatives. Starting in 1848 at the Seneca Falls Women's Right Convention, they resolved ; "That it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise." Now I'm not arguing that same-sex marriage is the same as the right to vote. Nor am I arguing it equates to this seventy-year battle. What I am contending is the fight for the vote and the fight for relationship recognition were fights that took a long time to come to fruition. We may be able to get some pointers.

During that time, three key figures in the fight for women's rights worked hard and died before seeing the fruits of their labor. Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the two women who helped organize and lead the Seneca Falls Convention, passed on in 1880 and 1902 respectively. The third mover and shaker, Susan B. Anthony, died in 1906. They had first proposed a federal amendment to the Constitution in 1866 to give women and black citizens the right to vote. Eventually, the Fifteenth Amendment granted African-American males the right to vote, but not women.

Wyoming and Utah territories, gave women the right to vote in 1869 and 1870. Michigan and Minnesota women won the right to vote in school board elections in 1875. A few other states gave women limited access to voting and then came Carrie Chapman Catt.

On April 3, 1893, the Colorado legislature passed a suffrage bill to be decided at the general election that fall. The women suffragists begged the national leaders for help and they sent Catt. In the fourth of six volumes, *The History of Women's Suffrage* (found at Project Gutenberg), Ida Harper wrote this about the Colorado fight:

A promise of consideration and such aid as the National Association was able to furnish was given. Later they decided to send Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt and guarantee her expenses in case she was not able to raise them in the State. From her past record, they thought it likely she would not only do that but put money in the treasury, and the result justified their expectations. She was a financial help, but, much as money was needed, her eloquence and judgment were worth more, and she always will have a warm place in the

hearts of Colorado women who were active in the campaign of 1893.

When that campaign opened, there was just \$25 in the treasury. Lucy Stone sent a donation of \$100. Iowa and California gave aid, and there were small contributions in money from members of the E. S. A. [Equal Suffrage Association] and from auxiliary clubs formed by Mrs. Chapman Catt in different parts of the State.

Catt raised money, worked with these women, and spoke to the reasons for Colorado women having the right to vote. She worked closely with them locally and got men to vote for women to get the voting franchise. Only a couple of years earlier, this fight had been lost quite handily.

Catt took what had worked in Colorado and moved on to the fight in Idaho. In 1896, Idaho gave women the right to vote. As a result, when Susan B. Anthony retired from the National American Women's Suffrage Association Catt was elected as her successor.

At this point, the national organizations were having little effect nationally while the state women's organizations in the American West got the vote in California, Kansas, and Alaska and Arizona territories. There was a full blown rift in the women's movement though.

Advocates for the "state strategy" and women like Alice Paul, leader of the Congressional Union and later the Women's Party, couldn't agree on how to proceed. Paul and others in the movement wanted to focus on the national movement and Congress and abandon the piecemeal approach. In a speech in New York City in December, 1916, Paul pointed out her strategy as found in *Ideas and Strategies of the Woman Suffrage Movement* by Roland Marchand:

We are not working to win New York. We are working to put the Federal Suffrage Amendment in the Constitution. The trouble with the suffragists is they are like the allies in the war State Suffrage by its scattered methods is losing as the allies have been losing. We lost Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, North Dakota – but why call the roll of those defeats! The method you ask us to pursue did not win a point last year or this, but at the National Capitol the situation is more hopeful because the Party in power is afraid of a method that actually costs them votes.

Paul believed they must confront and de-

mand the women's vote absolutely. Yet, up to that point, the national movements had gained a few votes in Congress but a steady drumbeat of state wins had gradually crept across the states and with it politicians who were dependent on the votes of women to win reelection. Catt understood this and the growing schism and had laid out her "secret winning plan" for women's suffrage.

When thirty-six state associations [of NAWSA, National American Women Suffrage Association], or preferably more, enter into a solemn compact to get the [Federal] Amendment submitted by Congress and ratified by their respective legislatures; when they live up to their compact by running a red-hot, never-ceasing campaign in their own states designed to create sentiment behind the political leaders of the states and to aim both these forces at the men in Congress as well as the legislatures, we can get the Amendment through. [The NAWSA associations] should be disciplined and obedient to the national officers in all matters...

We should win, if it is possible to do so, a few more states before the Federal Amendment gets up to the state legislatures...A southern state should be selected and made ready for a campaign, and the solid front of the 'antis' should be broken as soon as possible. Some break in the solid 'anti' East should be made too.

Catt knew they couldn't just win approval of the constitutional amendment in Congress. It needed to be "ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof," before it was fully enacted. Paul and her supporters believed it could pass through sheer popular support. Catt, having worked in the trenches, knew differently. What's more, she knew it wouldn't pass without support in the South and the East. That changed in 1917.

Suffragists fought and gained the women the limited right to vote in Arkansas primaries that year. Even though Arkansan women didn't have voter equality, this was a significant development that caused big electoral changes as detailed in the Encyclopedia of Arkansas:

Statewide primaries were held in May 1918, and more than 40,000 women voted. As a result, over fifty female delegates were elected to the Democratic State Convention. The convention included a women's suffrage plank in its platform, endorsed "unlimited

suffrage for women," and supported a federal women's suffrage amendment. During 1918, another attempt was made to include women's suffrage in a proposed Arkansas Constitution, but the constitution failed to receive a majority in the popular vote.

What was even more incredible was when the federal amendment needed ratification, the "compromise" grassroots organization made Arkansas the twelfth state to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment.

In 1917, Catt also had her "break in the 'anti' East." From an article in the *New York Times* about that era entitled, "1917: When Women Won Right to Vote:"

New York quickly became a pivotal state in the suffrage campaign, and soon "dozens of women who had never dealt with larger units than missionary societies, literary clubs or cake sales were given territory with 16,000 or 17,000 voters and ordered to reach every one of these men," the magazine observed.

At its height, the suffragette movement in the county enrolled 20,000 women and included 102 suffragette clubs, according to material in the files of the Westchester County Historical Society.

The state movements drove the national strategy. The national strategy ultimately gained women the vote, but not without the mass movement of people and allies.

This brings us to the point of my meandering hike through history.

When we strategize to bring about same-sex relationship recognition, we need to engage all viewpoints. The "all or nothing" strategy didn't work for many decades for women. It probably won't work for us in the short run. Catt recognized from working on the ground in Colorado and Idaho that working with those who marginally supported women's suffrage was a winner.

They are the minds they needed to persuade.

Minnesota and Michigan only gave women the right to vote in school board elections, at first. Arkansas only gave women the right to vote in primaries, initially. We need to listen and enlist those who are willing to fight for civil unions, repealing DOMA, or even enacting domestic partnerships if that will get them thinking about the issue. Catt's "Winning Plan" was to enlist all supporters regardless of their level of backing. She did so strategically thinking about how regional wins would eventually bear fruit with their neighbors.

Let us not forget it was Tennessee, Arkansas' neighbor to the east, which [put](#) the Nineteenth Amendment over the top, making it part of the U.S. Constitution.

As we consider our approach to same-sex relationship recognition by the Minnesota state legislature, let's think about what would really move this issue forward. Will demanding same-sex marriage or nothing really give us state recognition now? If civil unions would do the same thing, do we quibble? Do we plan on an all-out fight against everyone who disagrees in part but supports us in substance? I'm not willing to wait ten years or whatever. I believe this issue has come to a head and without action this year regardless of what it's called, we will be found with nothing once again.

Are we willing to learn from Carrie Chapman Catt's "Winning Plan" or will we butt heads for twenty more years? It's something to think about. ■

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See also:

"The DFL's Big Gay Farce" from Issue 457, November 29, 2012

"Three of Four Top Elected Minnesota Politicians Comment on the Marriage Debate" from Issue 458, December 13, 2012

"'Earnest Money': Repeal DOMA Now" from Issue 458, December 13, 2012

"Why We Can't Wait" an Interview with Sen. John Marty from Issue 460, January 10, 2013

"Waiting for Superman" from Issue 460, January 10, 2013

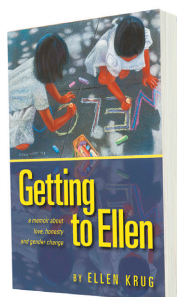
"Don't Skip Dessert" an Interview with Rep. Ryan Winkler from Issue 461, January 24, 2013

"What's In A Name?" A Case for Civil Unions from Issue 461, January 24, 2013



“GETTING TO ELLEN”: A MEMOIR ABOUT LOVE, HONESTY, AND GENDER CHANGE

WHAT ARE you willing to give up in order to become your most authentic self? Your amazing career? Your perfect marriage to your soul mate? Your financial success? While some may argue that a career, marriage, and financial success are the cornerstones of a wonderful and authentic life, Ed Krug knew that they came at a price: he was unable to explore and love the woman he knew he was. Thus begins the journey of Ed Krug in an effort to get to his true self: Ellen Krug. *Getting to Ellen*, a memoir by Lavender columnist Ellen Krug, is a heartfelt examination of Krug's past and her inspirational path to finding inner strength and loving the beautiful woman she is today.



Krug's emotional journey opens with an innocent childhood moment that became a profoundly defining experience. Eight-year-old Ed observes as a young neighbor girl pulls down her pants for several inquisitive boys in exchange for a quarter. But Ed's experience differs from the other boys'; he is amazed at the “glorious combination of clean lines that met at one magnificent place, the center of Christine's feminine universe.” Young Ed feels a tug of longing and jealousy for those smooth, clean lines that will remain inside him for a lifetime.

As Ed grows up in a dysfunctional family with an alcoholic father, he asserts his masculinity by becoming a sports star in school and then a ruthless lawyer. He marries Lydia, his high school sweetheart—his soul mate—and they begin to build a beautiful and successful life together. But the desire for clean lines is still there, prodding Ed to secretly wear women's lingerie and clothing. The strong, successful man that the world knows as Ed Krug is stuck living a false life. Only when Ed finally acknowledges the true woman inside does he begin to realize that he must give up everything to become Ellen. Ed's “Grand Plan” may have been admirable and desirable, but Krug's true “Grand Plan” took a different course: getting to Ellen. Ellen is “the product of years of denial, compromise, and fear that culminated in no other way but being honest.” Though the journey is painful, Ellen emerges into a beautiful life in Minneapolis, becoming the confident, compassionate, and poised woman the community knows today.

Unlike many memoirists that focus their energy on the main character and settle for a sub-par cast of supporting characters, Krug allows each person in her memoir to shine. The tumultuous depression and alcoholism of Ellen's father, “Tom Terrific,” isn't simply utilized as a means to push Ed over the edge. With brutal honesty, Krug unabashedly depicts Tom Terrific as a truly tragic character with nowhere else to turn except to suicide. Thap, the dear friend that stands with Krug through thick and thin, is not just an idealized depiction of compassion in Krug's life. Thap's compassion and love is

genuine and pure, and Krug's high opinion of him is evident.

Most beautiful, however, are Krug's recreations of her family. Krug's unending love for Lydia is evident, and the bond between Krug and Lydia is undeniable. Lydia is the light and love in Krug's life, and Krug excels at capturing Lydia's beautiful essence through prose. Lydia is an image of the person we are all looking for, the true soul mate whose love allows us to blossom and flourish into our authentic selves. Krug's two daughters are lovingly portrayed, with one of the memoir's most touching moments coming through Lily's recognition and acceptance of her mother. Though a perfect ending for

this beautiful family is not possible, Krug's undying love for the girls of Knollwood is gloriously evident.

Krug doesn't simply let her memoir rest on the impact of a good story. Her prose is lyrical and effective; her words read like poetry. Each page is full of beautifully constructed insights. Each sentence is a literature-lover's delight. Though her prose flows effortlessly, there is no doubt that each word was chosen for the particular purpose of creating an aesthetically pleasing experience for the reader. The remarkable consistency of such quality writing made me mourn the final pages of the book—precisely what great works of literature should do. Krug's commitment to telling her story in the most artistic way possible makes her prose among the strongest I've experienced in the memoir genre.

What strikes me about this memoir is that Krug does not demand the pity of her readers like so many memoirists unfortunately tend to do. Though *Getting to Ellen* will carry readers on an emotional (and sometimes painfully self-reflective) journey, Krug's readers will recognize that Ellen's struggles are quite similar to their own. Krug uses the insight she gained through navigating the world as both male and female to add an aspect of relatable humor. Krug looks at her life through a lens of humorous self-awareness, poking fun at the desire we all have for a “Grand Plan.”

Though this memoir focuses on Krug's transition from male to female, her story isn't simply about being transgender. Krug believes, “In the process of becoming Ellen, I became human. Far more human.” Krug points out our common experience of facing challenges that don't go away unless we actively work toward enlightenment. The message that self-awareness and authenticity should be our goal—and that our choices so often hold us back from becoming our authentic selves—is simple, pure, and universally relevant. *Getting to Ellen* will inspire readers, GLBT and non-GLBT alike, to look inward and strive for authenticity.

Getting to Ellen will be available for purchase by February 14, 2013 on Amazon, ebooks, and select bookstores. Visit www.getting-toellen.com for details about the first Minneapolis reading. ■





E.B. BOATNER'S "M-O-T-H-E-R SPELLS MURDER" THRILLS AND INTRIGUES

LAVENDER COLUMNIST E.B. Boatner has added another accomplishment to his long list of achievements with the recent publication of his first novel, *M-O-T-H-E-R Spells Murder*, a mystery novel that explores the devastating effects of scandal in a Southern family severed by secrets and greed.

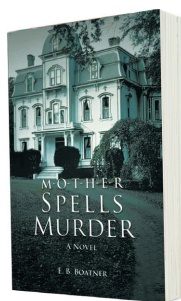
Introverted Gwendolyn thought the drama in her life would be over when she moved out of her Southern community into an elegant home in Boston. Filling the house to the brim with books, she enjoyed a calm and contented life until her mother, Elinor, moves from Atlanta to be closer to Gwendolyn after the death of Gwendolyn's father. Then Elinor is found brutally murdered in her nursing home with no clues left behind as to who could have committed the ghastly murder—or why.

Then Monica, the former mistress of her father, suddenly appears in town with her sickly son, Eric. When tragedy befalls the unexpected visitors, Gwendolyn quickly turns to her parents' sordid pasts to catch the murderer before she becomes his next victim. What she finds is an abysmal, manipulative relationship held together by lies and the desire to "keep up appearances" with Atlanta society. But most importantly, Gwendolyn must piece her fragmented memories together with the strange, cryptic letters between her mother and a mysterious man in order to save her own life. With the help of Thibodeau, an attractive detective who becomes a welcome addition in Gwendolyn's life, she attempts to uncover her parents' secret lives before it's too late.

Woven throughout Gwendolyn's search for the truth are the memories of Carroll Goslin, a man whose unrequited love for a young writer still burns obsessively regardless of the relationship's abusive and impossible nature. Descending into Carroll's psyche reveals his dark passions and the emotional and psychological scars he acquired under the demeaning and emasculating manipulation of his mother. Despite desperate attempts to break free from his mother's possessive behaviors, the damage he has suffered leads him to one unspeakable act after another.

In addition to an intriguing plot that requires the reader to constantly question the motives of the characters, Boatner has given life to a vibrant cast of characters that could very well be people one meets at a cocktail party. Even Elinor, who is never even alive throughout the plot of the novel, has a bold and brazen personality that demands the attention of the reader. Boatner constructs each character with minute details, down to the tough-yet-maternal behaviors of Pat Henley, the policewoman assigned to protect Gwendolyn. When asked whether his characters were based off people in his own life, Boatner notes, "If you've been raised as an only child in a dysfunctional Southern family, you don't need to go further than the dining room table to find characters—sometimes several in the same person."

Boatner creates a rich history between Elinor and her murder through Gwendolyn's discovery of her mother's coded correspondence with a former lover. This secondary plot, thick with the agony



of a twisted romance, is well-developed and captivating—sometimes even more so than the primary focus on Gwendolyn's present situation. Boatner doesn't simply rely on the quality of the main plot to carry the novel; his careful and thoughtful construction of Elinor's backstory strengthens the story and adds an additional dimension to the classic "whodunit" mystery.

The power dynamics between the characters were also impressively portrayed (much to the delight of my liberal arts-educated mind that is trained to spot the impact of power and privilege in everyday life and its artistic replica-

tions). Boatner's male characters are so often oppressed and controlled by the female characters that I find it hard to identify a single empowered male character in the novel. Carroll's oppressive mother literally continues to control him from her grave, and his brief affair with independence ends abruptly when he replaces his mother with a domineering lover who continues to keep him under the heel of her fashionable shoes. Eric, the son of Gwendolyn's father's mistress, is under his mother's constant scrutiny and experiences such a lack of freedom and independence that he simply cannot function on his own. Only when he is forced to protect himself from his untimely demise does he finally acquire a sense of manhood. Boatner effectively places the traditional "feminine" stereotypes of weakness, fear, and dependence on the men of this novel, and he enhances the traditional "masculine" stereotypes of domination, strength, and independence in his female characters (a move that makes us examine how our construction of gender affects our perception of people). The result is a fabulous experience of subverted gender roles within a work of entertaining fiction.

What makes this mystery novel quite extraordinary is Boatner's ability to capture Carroll's increasingly obsessive behavior and his need to control the fates of those who have wronged him. Through the examination of his memories, one becomes sympathetic with Carroll's weaknesses and understands his behavior as the culmination of years of emotional and psychological abuse. I found myself taking my sympathy one step further: maybe the true villains are not the people who commit acts of murder, but rather are the ones who slowly kill the souls of others with their selfishness, manipulation, and constant abuse. Boatner's novel demands that we examine the impact society has on the individual and how our own actions affect those around us.

M-O-T-H-E-R Spells Murder is not simply a mystery novel; its strong detail and Boatner's ability to reflect current struggles in our society sets it apart from the racks of repetitive mystery novels that lack the introspective voice of Boatner. Without a doubt, E. B. Boatner's first novel is a milestone for what will hopefully be a continually fruitful writing career.

Magers and Quinn Booksellers will be hosting a launch party for *M-O-T-H-E-R Spells Murder* on Wednesday, February 13, at 7:30 pm. E.B. Boatner will read from his novel and be available afterward for questions and conversation. For more information, visit www.magersandquinn.com or www.ebboatner.com. □





Hope

LAST VALENTINE'S Day, I penned a column which included a fake billboard and personal ad in my near constant quest for a female date. Sadly, no woman stepped forward to gush, "I want you, Ellie."

So much for that innovative—oh, I'll admit it, desperate—idea.

I then took things in a different direction: I placed an ad on Match.com under "Women Seeking Men."

Men?

Yes, dear gentle readers, in case you hadn't figured it out by now, I'm bisexual. I make no apologies.

Match.com doesn't have a category for bisexual people. And as for transgender folks like me seeking to date? There's nothing for us, either.

Still, I tried my best with Match.com. The very first sentence of my profile advised, "Please read this entire profile before responding." Six paragraphs later—after trying to be witty and interesting—I revealed that I'm transgender. "It's not for everyone," I wrote, "but I think I'm worth the trouble."

Several men responded along the lines, "I love what you have to say, and I like your picture too." We'd exchange some messages, spiking my hopes. Eventually, however, things came crashing down when the man would write something like, "Oh, I just went back and read your entire profile for the first time. Sorry, I didn't understand you're transgender. It's too much for me."

You guessed it—men being men, they

simply looked at my Match.com picture and age. I had forgotten that males don't follow directions especially well.

I gave up on Match.com and went to OK Cupid. At least OKC allows for a "bisexual" posting. Again, I wrote at my profile's end that I was transgender. Again, the men never read through the entire profile. Eventually, I wouldn't answer OKC messages until the man confirmed reading my entire profile, which in turn meant that I was pretty dateless.

Women, at least, didn't need to be prompted to read all of my OKC profile. For most women, my being transgender wasn't as much a problem as was being bisexual. "My girlfriend just left me for a man," one lesbian wrote. "I can't take the chance again."

Let me share a secret: being bisexual doesn't mean that I can't commit to the right person. Sure, I can play equally well for both teams, but I'm not hopelessly confused about what team I want. As they say, "it's all about the person."

Failing at Match.com and OKC, a month ago I threw a Hail Mary pass: Craig's List. At least CL recognizes that transgender and bisexual folk actually exist in the world.

In "Miscellaneous Relationships" under "T4M," I posted that I was seeking a long term relationship and not some casual sex hook-up. Readers saw that I was single, relatively smart, stable (well, actually that's quite debatable but let's sidestep the issue for now), and creative. Potential suitors

needed to be the same.

The Craig's List personal generated a dozen responses. I skipped the married men and three-word-responders, and settled on a man who liked Van Gogh and the MIA. We'll see where that relationship goes, but at the very least, for the first time in a long time, suddenly there's some hope.

Believe me, when you're fifty-six and trying to date, hope is something that's in real short supply.

I understand that with Craig's List, I need to be careful. But if you're trans and seeking to date, there aren't many options, as the above reflects. While there are some trans-specific dating sites, most get back to the question of sexual hook-ups.

At my age, hooking-up is the absolute last thing on my mind. I want someone to talk to, hang out with, and love. In the end, isn't that what most of us want?

I tell my friends—and anyone else who will listen—that in twenty years, being transgender or bisexual won't be a big deal. By then, more and more people will be comfortable with living genuine lives, including wherever their sexuality takes them.

That world of twenty years from now will be pretty cool, I'm just sure. I envy all you youngsters who will get to enjoy it.

As for me, I have to live in the now. It isn't easy, but at least I've got some options, some reason to hope.

That's way better than what anyone could have said twenty years ago. ■



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Stung By A Wasp

I LOVE honey bees. They're cute, industrious, and their weird sex lives with flowers is pretty much responsible for life on this planet. I've even made friends with bumblebees. They nest in my deck and pop out whenever they hear my voice. Then they bob languidly at my side as I do yard work like tiny, friendly Macy's Thanksgiving Day balloons. But I don't like wasps. They look and act like flying hypodermic needles. They are quietly aggressive, orchestrating unprovoked attacks when you least expect it.

Weirdly, though, I'm attracted to human WASPs. I have dated White Anglo Saxon Protestants almost exclusively. I like 'em blonde, blue-eyed, and cold, even though they're as dangerous and unpredictable as real wasps.

Friends have begged me to change my type, and sample the warm, nurturing, emotionally-available women whose ancestors hail from Mediterranean, Middle Eastern or African countries. But, sadly, the heart wants what the heart wants. And my heart wants a WASP.

As you can see by the hard vowel at the end of my name, I'm a bit ethnic. I'm a second generation Italian who grew up in a houseful of yellors. I was raised to argue about every-

thing big or small, loudly and with passion, but not to take any argument personally and never hold a grudge. As a result, I like a good fight. I find it invigorating and healthy to spew out negative emotions as you feel them. It gets them out of your system and let's you move on with your life. Plus, it usually results in excellent makeup sex.

But WASPs don't operate this way. Nothing is done aloud. It's all subtext.

My girlfriend is as WASPy as they come. She's a direct descendent of Miles Standish, the captain of the Mayflower, and she was raised not far from Plymouth Rock. For the first year of our relationship, she would leave every time I yelled. The first time she left was when I yelled at my cable box for misbehaving. As I was scolding it vigorously and threatening to pour a pot of scalding water on it, I heard the door slam.

She later explained that she did not know how to cope with yelling. She was raised in a quietly angry family who only argued via exchanges of slightly raised eyebrows and pointed silences. She didn't speak to a family member for years after a devastating volley of eye rolls over what any untrained observer would have considered a pleasant Christmas dinner.

I experienced a taste of this violent silence on a recent visit to her family in New England. To break the weird, mannered quiet of a family lunch, I blathered on about a topic of which I know nothing about—the North Atlantic fishing industry—and made what I thought were a few clever jokes at the expense of local crustaceans. Suddenly, my girlfriend and her sister stormed out of the room in different directions. I found my girlfriend sitting in the car, steaming up the windows with fury and vowing never to return to Maine.

"What just happened?" I asked.

"Didn't you see that look my sister gave me when you told your little lobster joke?" she asked, genuinely stunned that I had not recognized what touched off this passive brawl. "She clearly thought that you were telling her that she has an eating disorder. We're not welcome here anymore."

"You got all that from a look?" I asked, thinking of a recent screaming match I had with my brother a few weeks before. The next day, we were on the phone laughing and planning a family vacation together.

"We're WASPs," she shrugged. "We don't announce it before we sting." ■

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-STACEY'S BETROTHED

Dear Stacey's Betrothed:

"Don't tell Nana or she'll die," is effective emotional blackmail. But if old people really dropped dead every time they received "shocking" information, no one would have grey hair and we wouldn't have to worry about the state of Medicare.

How close can Stacey and her grandmother really remain if Stacey has to hide her most meaningful relationship? The sacrifice of intimacy with someone so close seems like an even bigger loss than the potential \$10,000.

Stacey should risk the murder rap and introduce her beloved (you) to the old lady. Once Nana survives the initial news, Stacey should invite her to come dance at your wedding.

Dear Ms. Behavior:

I have recently just started hooking up with other lesbians through dating sites. This is a first-time experience for me. Is it me, my

40-something age, and values of integrity and honesty, that leave me open to the rampant dishonesty in the lesbian dating world? Promiscuity in today's world can be dangerous and I am not into it. How does one find womyn of the same values and not be left home dateless because of more conservative values?

-FORTY-SOMETHING LESBIAN

Dear Forty-Something Lesbian:

Who are these rampantly dishonest lesbians in the dating world, and what have they done to you? Did someone show you her insensitivity by seducing you without inviting you to move in?

The fact that you are looking for "womyn" at this point in time suggests that you might be happier advertising in a Sapphic or warrior-feminist publication, where you're more likely to run into a natural-fiber clad womyn who dances to the beat of your drumming rituals. (It also suggests that your letter arrived through some sort of 1980s time machine.)

Dating sites can be a great way to meet someone, but people often describe themselves too generally. Ms. Behavior's advice to anyone placing or answering an ad is to be as specific as possible. For example, nearly everyone describes themselves as attractive, sensitive, and funny. (Would that it were true.) Those sorts of descriptions don't really say much. You'll more likely attract someone suitable with a more accurate ad. Remember (unless you're a gay man), it's not quantity you're shooting for here.

Below, Ms. Behavior has created descriptive and focused examples of personal ads for lesbians and gay men. Perhaps these are based on profiles of her friends:

1) "Green-eyed, buxom, bon vivant, 1940s starlet-type lesbian writer seeks creative dyke with a good vocabulary, who looks great in jeans and equally lovely in a silk dress. You prefer "South Park" over "Downtown Abbey" and cupcakes over mousse, but you'd much rather vacation in the South of France than a campground in Maine."

2) "Muscular lazy GM, great cook, smoker with lots of bad habits, seeks an easy-going man with several vices who knows how to have a good time. Our idea of a great date would be sex in the sun, then a huge steak followed by homemade chocolate cake, beer, and a long nap."

3) "Stuffy-by-day, passionate-by-night, lesbian lawyer with secret interest in herbs, *People Magazine*, trashy novels, and the supernatural, seeks warm, spiritual femme for gardening, foot rubs, film noir, and...well, butt fucking."

4) "Striking articulate GM seeks handsome Semitic lover with cute tuchiss for walks to temple, bagels and lox, and kishkes. Cut or uncut okay."

Ms. Behavior also created a personal ad specifically for you. Since you didn't provide many details, she filled in her own. Feel free to replace any which don't apply:

"Lesbian feminist seeks conservative, responsible, rigid dyke for predictable relationship. You must enjoy camping, traveling through the woods with several cats and dogs in a Winnebago, and listening to country music created by lesbian farmers living on the land in underdeveloped countries. Sex must be preceded by hugging, must occur in the dark (candlelight okay), and involve no penetration. Facial hair okay, but womyn with laugh lines need not apply." □

TROLÓN, UN DIABLITO ROSA

POR RODRO



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The Family Room

"WE'RE GOING to take you to the Family Room now," a man in a brown suit tells my family.

My grandmother, Mama, squeezes my hand and I look up to I see her face tighten. Her eyes are so full of tears that they have to let go, and so they do; they run down in streams, across her paper-thin, sun-spotted skin.

There is something bad about the Family Room, I sense. My uncle, my brother, everyone with us, they're all tenser now.

The man in the brown suit escorts us from the ER waiting room and into a handsomely decorated room just big enough to fit everyone. There are flowers on an end table beside a floral-upholstered couch, and the smell here, it's not so clinical. It smells nice. And lots of Kleenex. Boxes of it everywhere.

This room is so different. Uncomfortably different. It's like we've stepped out of a hospital and into someone's house.

The man in the brown suit leaves. Mama strokes my hair. No one is sobbing, but everyone's crying. I don't understand why. My mom is here, I saw the paramedics put her into the ambulance, but she'll be OK because this is a hospital. She's with the doctors now. Right?

There is some conversation amongst my family—I forget about what. It's maybe Mama trying to lighten the mood. I look around the

room, at its decor—its cheap wood paneling, mint green walls, floral paintings. Something is wrong about this place. It's so, well, generic. Better than an ER, yes, but in a way spooky. Why does there exist such a room in a hospital?

The man in the brown suit re-enters. He is careful to shut the door quietly.

Mama squeezes my hand again. Her face again tightens. She looks at me, her eyes full of tears, and she smiles. She returns her attention to the man in the brown suit.

Something is coming.

"The doctors have done everything they can do," he starts. I forget the next few sentences, but the last three words are forever: "... she passed away."

And there is a suspension of time. Everything moves—for just a moment—in slow motion. There is no sound. The walls of the Family Room fade away. My vision tunnels. This moment lasts forever, a form of consciousness felt during only moments like this.

Then everything is loud. The silent sniffles, the restrained tears—everything—replaced with sounds of terrible distress. Mama moans loudly. She screams.

I know I'm screaming, too. My eyes aren't enough to handle my tears. I'm nauseous. My heart will explode. My face is red. I'm hot all over. And I scream. I drown in the

mucus in my throat. My nose, it knows that my eyes can't handle all the tears, so it runs.

I want to run.

I want to run into my mom's arms so she'll make everything all right. I want, in this moment, and more than anything else in the whole wide world, for her to rush into this room, this horrible room, scoop me up, and run away with me.

I can't breathe.

The man in the brown suit says something that no one pays attention to and he leaves.

Mama turns, wraps her arms around me, puts my head under her neck, and strokes my hair, sobbing, writhing in pain. She squeezes 'til it hurts...

Mama tucks me in bed later that night and lays with me, our heads on the same pillow, she, petting my hair. She sings to me what she always sings when I sleep over at her house: "Go to sleep, Go to sleep, Go to sleep lit-tle ba-by. Go to sleep, Go to sleep, Go to sleep ba-by boy."

And here we lay, night after night, repeating this routine: a mother who's lost a daughter, a son who's lost a mother, sharing our pillow, sharing our song, sharing our heartbreak.

Don't wait until Mothers' Day to tell her what she means to you. Call her. Now. □

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